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ABSTRACT

This study surveyed student views of their schools and attempted to determine the degree of student alienation in Western Australian high schools. One hundred students from each of twelve high schools participated in the study. Data were gathered from a questionnaire and follow-up interviews. Findings indicated that a majority of students felt a reasonably positive sense of commitment to school although a significant number were highly alienated. The factors most strongly associated with alienation levels of students were student-teacher relationship and student academic level. In general, relationships with teachers tended to be formal, often ambivalent, and sometimes very negative. Some correlation between alienation and academic self-concept was found. Socioeconomic backgrounds of students were related to levels of alienation, with higher alienation scores found among students from lower status groups. Smaller schools had lower levels of alienation and better student-teacher relationships. Variables considered "pastoral care structures" (designed to combat alienation), such as house, year, tutor or form systems, had no significant association with overall levels of alienation. (Author/JM)

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DO SCHOOLS CARE?

The Student View

MARY P DYNAN

A study jointly sponsored by
Nedlands College of Advanced Education and
the Education Department of Western Australia

Co-operative Research Series
Report No 6

Education Department of Western Australia
1980

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FOREWORD

In recent years considerable time and resources have been devoted to the less tangible aspects of a student's secondary schooling such as pastoral care, and there have been expressions of concern that many of the organisational structures within the school are not suited to the students.

Nedlands College was asked to participate with the Education Department in the cooperative research project to ask students what they think of their schools. I am very appreciative of the readiness with which members of the College staff accepted the request and the contributions they made.

I am aware of the difficulties experienced in coming to grips with the task because of the problems of definition and the accumulation of quantitative data. As the project progressed it became apparent that the findings would be able to do little more than indicate possible areas for more exhaustive research. Nevertheless what has been found will make interesting reading, and despite the tentativeness of the findings the report will give food for thought to many.

I would like to record my appreciation to all of the people involved in the study and in particular to Mrs M Dynan, the research officer, for their contributions to analysing such an important issue.

D. Mossenson

D MOSSENSON
DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF EDUCATION

September 1980

PROLOGUE

"Grey chairs...grey desks. I think of a long boring day that'll never end".
(Year 8 girl).

"I like school - I really enjoy it and I don't know what I'm going to do when I have to leave. I like learning". (Year 12 girl).

"Teachers - you get the occasional good one. Instead of a barrel of good apples spoilt by one rotten one - its a question of a barrel of rotten apples with an odd good one". (Year 12 boy).

"Yes - I feel pushed around. I don't think I've had a say in anything I wanted to do. I don't think the subjects are doing anything for me but I just have to accept it. And that makes me angry". (Year 11 girl).

"Teachers think I'm no good. It shows all over their face. You can really see it - you can see the teacher talking more to other kids. They treat the duller kids unfairly. If they are good to me, I'll be good to them". (Year 8 boy).

"I'd be really reluctant to take up teaching, because there are really so many people who shouldn't be teaching that I don't want to be another one of those". (Year 12 girl).

"When I get up in the morning - I say 'oh no - not another day of school' and I can't wait for the holidays - but when I am at school I always make the most of it". (Year 9 girl).

While these quotations do not represent the views of a majority of the High School students, they are by no means isolated responses.

LETTER OF REFERRAL

Dear Dr Mossenson,

In 1978 you invited Nedlands College to co-operate with the Education Department of Western Australia to investigate how student welfare in high schools might be further encouraged and fostered.

A Committee of Management was established with representation from the Department, the College and the schools to oversee the investigation and to facilitate co-operation among all concerned. A research officer, appointed by the Department and provided with office and support facilities by the College, was co-opted to the Committee, whose membership is listed at the foot of this letter.

It is now my pleasure to forward to you a report of the Committee's investigations. In so doing I express on behalf of the Committee our thanks and appreciation to Mary Dynan who, as research officer, undertook with flair as well as industry and good humour much of the detailed work associated with the research and the writing of the report; to personnel at the Research Branch of the Education Department who helped with the statistical design and data analyses; to library and clerical staff of Nedlands College who were untiring in their willingness to assist; and to the teachers and pupils of the twenty four high schools who kindly allowed their schedules to be interrupted for the administration of questionnaires and interviews. Reasons of confidentiality preclude my listing these schools by name.

On behalf of representatives of Nedlands College who served on the Committee, may I express our satisfaction at receiving the opportunity to co-operate in a research project that we believe will be at least as valuable to us in our task of preparing secondary teachers as we hope it will be to you in the task of providing secondary education appropriate to the needs of the community. Perhaps we may hope for further opportunities to deepen this co-operation.

Yours sincerely

J.F. JONES.

List of Committee Membership

Dr J F Jones	Nedlands College
Mr J Casey	Melville Senior High School
Miss B Cooke	Nedlands College
Mrs M Dynan	Research Officer
Mr A Edwards	Nedlands College
Mr K Grenfell	Nedlands College
Mr M Harvey	Nedlands College
Dr K M Jack	Nedlands College
Mr W McAtee	Education Department
Dr H Pearson	Education Department
Mrs P Taylor	Hollywood Senior High School

CONTENTS

PROLOGUE

LETTER OF REFERRAL

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I	:	INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER II	:	STUDENT WELFARE : WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID AND DONE	4
CHAPTER III	:	A REVIEW OF STUDIES OF ALIENATION IN SCHOOLS	17
CHAPTER IV	:	STUDENT PERCEPTIONS : A PRELIMINARY STUDY	23
CHAPTER V	:	THE SURVEY - AIMS AND PROCEDURES	45
CHAPTER VI	:	THE QUESTIONNAIRE : WHAT WE FOUND FROM THE STATISTICAL ANALYSIS	48
CHAPTER VII	:	THE QUESTIONNAIRE : "THE THINGS THAT THEY SAID" -	74
CHAPTER VIII	:	SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS	86

EPILOGUE		97
REFERENCES		98
APPENDIX A	Interview Schedule	102
APPENDIX B	Questionnaire	103
APPENDIX C	Reliability and Validity of Scales	111
APPENDIX D	Letter to Student Participants	115
APPENDIX E	Notice to Parents	116

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		Page
1	Summary responses of students on semantic rating scale for school climate.	25
2	Things most liked in school	28
3	Things most disliked about school	29
4	Things which 'turn off'students	30
5	School effect on students' feelings	38
6	Mean alienation scores for each school	52
7	Distribution of alienation among boys and girls	53
8	Mean alienation scores for each year level	54
9	Percentages of low alienation and high alienation students in each year level	55
10	Mean alienation scores of students in different academic levels	55
11	Percentages of low alienation and high alienation students in each academic level	56
12	Mean alienation for students within socio-economic categories	57
13	Mean alienation scores for different categories of ethnic background	58
14	Numbers of students in each pastoral care system	59
15	Percentage distribution of responses in relation to persons showing interest in students	60
16	Percentage distribution of ratings for academic self concept	61
17	Percentage distributions of students' like/dislike of school	61
18	Distribution of teacher relations for the whole sample	62
19	Mean scores for teacher relations in each school	63
20	Mean alienation scores for each school year group	64
21	Mean scores for teachers relations for each academic level.	65
22	Variation of mean scores for teacher relations with academic self concept.	65
23	Mean teacher relations score for students who like or dislike school.	66
24	Distribution of mean teacher relations scores according to socio-economic status.	67
25	Mean teacher relations scores according to ethnic background.	68

Table		Page
26	Pearson correlation co-efficients for self-esteem, alienation and teacher relations	70
27	Students' vocational aspirations and expectations	71
28	Students' education aspirations and expectations	72
29	Frequency of responses - making school more satisfying	74
30	Response categories on improving teaching interest	79
31	Item-to-total correlations and alpha co-efficients for alienation scales	112
32	Item-to-total correlations and standardized alpha co-efficient for Teacher Relations measure	113
33	Item-to-total correlations and standardized alpha co-efficient for self-esteem measure	114

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURES

1	Histograms of students' ratings of high school along eight dimensions	26
2	Distribution of alienation scores for the total sample	49
3	Distributions of scores for three components of alienation for the total population	50
4	Distribution of self esteem scores for the total sample	69

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

During 1977, the Director Ceneral of the Education Department of Western Australia established a Primary and Secondary Advisory Committee to review state primary and secondary education and suggest initiatives that might be undertaken by the Education Department. A subcommittee of the Secondary Advisory Committee was convened to examine the question of student welfare. This matter had previously been raised as an area of concern at a meeting of the Western Australian High School Principals Association in 1976 where the issue of student disaffection was raised and discussed. It was the view of the subcommittee, and of the full committee, that the issues relating to student welfare should be the subject of a research project. Responding to this advice the Director General approached the Nedlands College of Advanced Education (then the Western Australian Secondary Teachers College) with a view to undertaking a co-operative research study. This step led to the formation of a project steering committee, known as the Student Welfare Committee; the committee contained representatives from the Education Department and the Nedlands College of Advanced Education.

In the discussions leading to the establishment of the Student Welfare Committee the main question of concern was stated by a senior representative of the Department:

> "Are there feasible organisational and instructional patterns which can lead to greater student welfare than presently exists in a majority of Western Australian schools?"

The committee was asked to make a study of the situation in Western Australian High Schools with a view to contributing information and views which might assist in answering that question.

1.2 EXPLORING THE ISSUES

The committee had first to examine and analyse the complex issues arising in any discussion of student welfare in schools in order to clarify the overall task. Questions which arose in this exploratory phase included:

- What is involved in catering for the social and emotional needs of students over and above their cognitive needs? Can the two needs be separated?

- To what extent do schools in Western Australia meet all of the student's developmental needs?

- What is the extent of student disaffection in High Schools in the State?

- Does the school system, as presently structured, militate against the development of student satisfaction at the social and emotional level?

- Are there some structural or other systematic modifications which might improve the climate within schools and reduce the problem of student disaffection?

Amongst the wide variety of views held on these and related issues, two extreme ones emerged. One extreme held that students have a great deal of freedom, with opportunities for participation and 'belonging'; that, in general, students were satisfied and that the trouble-makers were only those who were unamenable no matter what the changes in the school's organisation. The other extreme viewed the schools as "trouble spots", with climates of deepening disenchantment, with concomitant problems of discipline, truancy, drug-taking, and increasing under-performance. The committee decided that a clearer picture of the real situation was essential and appointed a research officer so that a study of the schools could be carried out.

1.3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Though the committee would have wished to ascertain teacher perceptions and attitudes it was felt that the first priority was to seek information from the students themselves since they were at the centre of all discussion. The study therefore concentrates on ascertaining student views about relevant aspects of school and determining the extent of their disaffection from (or commitment to) school. The results of research into similar problems in other countries and Australia which are reviewed in Chapter 2 suggest that the problems of disaffection referred to can be more accurately defined as the condition of *alienation* and that this condition may be related to a number of factors including school structures and teacher behaviours.

The study therefore sought first, to seek out relevant findings about student alienation and its possible causes from previous studies. It then attempted to examine the situation in Western Australian high schools in relation to student alienation as well as seeking the views and perceptions of students on a number of aspects of their lives in school which research suggested might have some bearing on the extent and depth of alienation among students.

It was not the purpose of the study to provide clear-cut answers to the problem of alienation. To have asserted such a purpose would have been naive in view of the long-standing and universal nature of the problem and the obvious complexity of the related factors. Instead the committee believed that by providing data and information on which further discussion and action could be based the study might make a useful contribution to the search for improved conditions within the high school system.

1.4 FORMAT OF THE REPORT

After a review of some important research findings on student alienation and other relevant factors, an analysis of the first stage of the study, in which students from a small sample of schools were interviewed about a wide range of aspects of their school life, is presented in Chapter 4. In Chapters 5 - 7 details of the main school survey and the findings which emerged are presented. A summary of the main findings and some of the possible implications for schools and teachers are discussed in the final Chapter.

CHAPTER 2 : STUDENT WELFARE - WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID AND DONE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Somewhere in the common consciousness is ingrained the myth that "school days are the happiest days". When one reads some accounts of school life in days gone by, one wonders how the saying began. However it might be true to say that present day educators are plagued by the feeling that they *ought* to be the happiest. This feeling is given some substance by a growing body of research[1] which is showing that social and emotional handicaps have a detrimental effect on the development of full cognitive potential. Following the growth of large schools which are geared to offer students maximum opportunities and choices for intellectual development, questions have arisen about the ability of such institutions to provide a climate satisfactory for the emotional and social development of students. While such schools may cater adequately for the intellectual growth of the majority of students, some would argue that they are less effective in meeting the student's needs to "belong" and to be treated as a unique individual.

Until recently comparatively little attention has been paid to the opinions of students as consumers, but a steady trickle of information on this aspect of life in school is building up a clearer picture of the situation. The overall impression emerging is one of student dissatisfaction particularly at the secondary level.[2]

The evidence of such disatisfaction and the disruption apparently following in its wake have alerted school authorities in many countries to the need to examine more closely ways in which schools can best promote the well-being of their students. Various strategies

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1 See: Scheirer M.A. & Kraut R.E. Increasing Educational Achievement via Self Concept Change. Review of Educational Research winter 1979. Vol. 49 No.1. pp131-150.

2 For example refer to Meighan R. "The pupil as client: the learner's experience of schooling". Educational Review No. 29, Feb 1977.

have been developed for dealing with what has come to be called the problem of *alienation* from school. An explanation of the concept of alienation, as defined by different writers, is given in Chapter 3. In general terms we may describe an alienated student as one who feels powerless to influence what happens to him (or her) and that his views are of little consequence. He cannot see the relevance of what is going on in school or what he is made to do there. He is estranged from the school community and its values. This combination of attitudes has a bearing on his behaviour. Staples (1977) lists some of the behaviours likely to be associated with alienation in students as follows:

1) Dropping out of school
2) Poor and irregular attendance
3) Unruly or disruptive behaviour
4) Virtual withdrawal from participation (although physically present)
5) Failing school subjects
6) Emotional maladjustment

This chapter looks at some of the efforts in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Australia, which have been directed to dealing with problems of this nature, variously ascribed to such things as school size and bureaucratisation, streaming and labelling, deteriorating teacher-pupil relationships, the separation of the world of school from the 'real' world. A lot of the literature emanates from the sponsors or directors of schemes designed to reduce alienation and there is not a great deal of independent evaluation. What does emerge is the fact that in many places, a great deal of energy and imagination are being applied to trying to solve the problems.

2.2 HOUSE AND YEAR SYSTEMS

In most large schools, efforts have been made to lessen the impact of size, by dividing students into smaller groups, such as year or house groups. Some schools, with the facilities, have been able to establish a system of mini-schools within the larger school. There is debate about the relative merits of the year and house system, some claiming that the latter has the advantage of giving

the student the opportunity of meeting people in other age groups. With both these sytems, there is the danger that they just become vehicles of administrative convenience, and lose sight of their ostensible purpose which is to make the school a place of more human dimension for the student.

Dierenfield (1976) made a large scale study of the house system in British comprehensive schools. He was interested, as an American, because this system seemed to offer a great deal more in the way of systematic and continuing interest in the welfare and personal development of every student than was the case in the more impersonal American high schools. He found that in some cases the system achieved its stated purpose which was to "provide the stimulation and services necessary for strong pastoral care and personal development of pupils." However, in most cases, he found that it was less than fully effective. Among the factors upon which the success of the house system depended, the commitment to it of the principal appeared to be of great importance. A factor militating against success was the cramped and unsuitable facilities in many schools.

In Western Australia, house and year systems are in operation in many schools, but there has so far been little systematic evaluation of their effectiveness in providing for the welfare of students. As suggested by Callinan (1975) there has been little evaluation of such pastoral care structures in other Australian states either.

2.3 TUTORIAL SYSTEMS

Many schools in Australia have retained the system of form masters. However in a situation where multiple options have more or less broken down the traditional form as a stable organisational unit, a system of tutor groups or teacher-advisers has been established in many places. In some schools, this arrangement also works in conjunction with a house or year system. A number of variations of tutorial system exist. On the American scene,

one well-known development involving teacher-advisers is the Model Schools Project.[3] According to Callinan (1977) who visited schools in this project, the role of the teacher-adviser corresponds most closely with the pastoral-care-teacher or tutor-teacher on the Australian scene. Clay (1977) writes about a successful variation of this system in Vahalla, San Diego, where the students selected their own advisers rather than, as customarily happened, being assigned to advisory groups. Pilkington and Jarmin (1977) however make a distinction between the teacher-adviser and the teacher-counsellor, and imply that it is important to understand this distinction in terms of outcome. A system which involves teacher advisers has education as its primary focus. While it achieves the aim of humanising the school and giving students a sense of belonging, the functions expected of a teacher-adviser are such that every teacher and even other personnel in the school can assume the role with the minimum of in-service help. On the other hand the teacher-counsellor role emphasises the total growth of the students and, while subsuming the teacher-adviser functions, which are mainly in the cognitive domain, adds student development in the affective domain to the expectations. The teacher-student relationship becomes that of helper-helpee and activities such as values clarification, problem solving, decision making, communication training and development of self-awareness are appropriate to the relationship. By reason of the extra skills required to carry out this role, intensive in-service activity is necessary to help teachers acquire them. The teacher-counsellor system envisages that a school counsellor, with specialist skills, will be closely involved in the in-service training of personnel and that teachers will become more aware of the contribution to be made by this person. It is interesting that in one Western Australian School with a teacher-adviser system, the teachers involved suggested in discussions relating to the present study, that it was difficult to prevent their role from developing into that of a teacher-counsellor. Becoming aware of the limitations of their training, they expressed an interest in further in-service help in this area. They also felt the need to have on hand the services of a more specialised professional.

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3 A description of this project is provided in the reference: Trumps J L & Georgiades W. "Doing better with what you have- N.A.S.S.P. Model Schools Project." N.A.S.S.P. Bulletin 54, 346, 1970.

2.4 SCHOOL COUNSELLING

The British conception of a school counsellor in some ways resembles the kind of specialised professional envisaged above. The school counselling movement in Britain has more of a mental health orientation than does the guidance officer system in Western Australia. School counselling courses have only been available there since 1965, but the development of those courses coincided with the move to establish pastoral care structures, growing interest in personal and social education, and an awareness of the mental health responsibilities of schools. The main contribution of these courses has been to inject a more child-centred approach into schools. Graduates of the courses have not only been employed as counsellors but in many of the newly created pastoral positions they have been able to apply the preventive emphases of their training, acting as agents of change within the school system. Vigilance in respect to children's difficulties and an emphasis on the importance of relationships are two of the most important contributions of the counsellor. Most of those who have been employed as counsellors have developed a consultancy role to serve their colleagues in the school. Many also counsel parents and find that the parents refer their children to them. School counselling in the sense that it is understood in Britain is prophylactic in nature. It is aimed at the normal child, the disturbed child being referred to the school psychological service. Daws (1975) gives an enlightening account of how counselling fits into the general guidance provision of the school. Jones (1970) describes a successful attempt to incorporate this view of counselling in one school. It is interesting that in recent literature on the role of school social work in the United States (e.g. Costin 1975 ; Thurber and Anderson 1977) a similar emphasis on the social worker as change agent is envisaged for the future.

2.5 ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

While the original "alternative" school, A.S. Neill's Summerhill, was in Britain and some attempts at establishing alternative or

free schools have been seen in the last decade there - a notable one being White Lion Free School in Islington, London - the movement has had little official encouragement in that country.[4] In Australia a few alternative schools have appeared but in the United States there has been a veritable explosion, numerous alternative schools and programmes being developed with the blessing of the school boards and education authorities. Not all students fail to cope with the ordinary high school (many are well satisfied with it) but for those who are disenchanted and alienated a completely different type of situation may be the answer. Many of these innovatory schools, as described by Broad (1977) are running successfully. They include alternative schools, housed completely away from any school building or in an identifiably separate part of a school, schools-without-walls or extended day programmes. In some it is left to student choice, though Glattorn (1977) is of the opinion that fitting students and alternative programmes together should not be left to chance. In his view there should be screening techniques and interviews with students and parents to make sure they know the nature of the programme and its appropriateness for them.

The advocates of alternative schools are of the opinion that a monolithic system is not as effective as a variety of approaches. Sizer (1976) says that pluralism must be acknowleged in the educational system and diversity must not be feared. He talks of providing a "smorgasbord of schools, accredited, open and accessible to all who would choose among them."

The school district of Philadelphia is one educational authority which has made a concerted effort to provide such a "smorgasbord." Staples (1977) talked of over 120 alternative programmes involving over 10,000 students, both those who seemed to be alienated and those who were potentially so. Most of the alternative programmes originated in the schools, but the district board provided the additional resources needed for a high degree of individualized instruction and counselling. The programmes include emphasis on remedial work, motivation,

4 For details see Newell P. "Time for a Change," Times Educational Supplement 29 September 1978

self-awareness, building self-esteem, career education and affective education. Flexibility is encouraged and the environment is non-threatening. Staples claims that a myriad of alternatives like LADS (Learning Alternatives for Disruptive Students), PLUS (Pupils Learning Usable Skills), SAVE (Selecting Alternatives to Violence through Education) and TIME (Taking In More Education) are "keeping more children in school and freeing them from alienation and apathy." A concomitant and significant benefit is also the spill-over to the regular high schools of a greater commitment to community based education, school-work opportunities, student decision making and more flexibility and variety.

Another well-documented high school programme for dealing with disaffected youth is the Focus programme of Roseville Area School District, Minnesota. Its main goal is to decrease the incidence of alienation and improve self-concept. Apart from a focus on the individual needs of each student, a state-funded work experience component provides an opportunity for the students to get an accurate view of the responsibilities and realities of employment. The organisers claim that the family group atmosphere and small group interaction which is the backbone of the project make the Focus programme significantly different from other mini-school concepts dealing with alienated students.[5]

The Focus programme deals with those students who are performing well below their capacity both socially and academically. Numerous other alternative programmes could be cited whose emphasis is specifically on students whose alienation manifests itself in disruptive behaviour. Maynard (1977) describes one such programme, where over a period of five years Cleveland High School, Seattle, transformed itself from the school in the city with the most disruptive and anti-social

5 Focus A Successful High School Programme for Dealing with Disaffected Youth.
Roseville Area School District 623 Minn. 1975

behaviour to one having the city's lowest drop-out and absentee rate and virtually no violence or vandalism. This was achieved by concentration on improving school climate and structural change involving the elimination of unnecessary rules and assessments. There was a conscious effort to build student self-esteem and develop good relations between staff and students as well as among the various ethnic groups of students.

2.6 SCHOOL CLIMATE AND TEACHER ALIENATION

School climate as a factor causing alienation has been investigated by several researchers such as Halpin (1967), Hoy (1972) and others. The alienation of teachers themselves in relation to administration has been pointed to as a factor in student alienation. Giroux (1976) says of American education that if it is to make "any productive headway in the seventies, it's going to have to replace an outmoded structure with one that is horizontally supportive rather than vertically repressive." Looking at priorities for research in Canadian education in the 1980's Wallin (1978) also linked student alienation with teacher alienation, which he ascribed to management problems. He saw decentralisation and greater autonomy for teachers as a necessary step towards the reduction of such alienation. He also envisaged the development of a type of "group practice" for teachers and stated that the application of management expertise to the school situation would do much to improve school climate. In Wallin's view it is necessary to reduce teacher alienation in order to deal effectively with student alienation.

2.7 CURRICULUM INNOVATION

Many people have pinned their hopes of making school relevant on the development of a more humanistic curriculum. Berman (1968) is typical of this school of thought. She has developed what can be described as "a humanistic processes curriculum" which treats equally both the cognitive and affective processes,

because these two aspects of man's nature cannot be treated separately. The emphasis is on communication skills - the spoken word and non-verbal communication, the process of systematising by which man tries to make sense out of his experience and the nature of attachments. Other priorities in this curriculum are preparation for different stages of life, both youth and old age, and the capability for self-awareness. Wilson (1977) puts forward the same viewpoint.

> "In no sense do I mean to imply any rejection of content and knowledge.....yet subject matter must not become an end itself, but should be utilised as a vehicle to create a just, actualised, open and efficacious society."

2.8 ADVOCATES OF RADICAL CHANGE

Since it is a minority of students who are unable to cope with school, some people argue that there is merit in keeping the system basically the same while trying to alleviate the misery of the disaffected. At the other extreme there are the advocates of "deschooling" who claim that school as we know it has no contribution to make to the welfare of the young and society - that it is of its nature alienating. From that viewpoint, the question arises as to whether or not anything of value can be achieved without the dismantling of the system and the abolition of compulsory schooling. Hodgkins (1978) writing about education in the year 2000 challenges the assumption that all proper secondary education must take place in schools and between the ages of twelve and eighteen. He outlines a programme which involves a core curriculum ensuring success for all in basic skills by age thirteen. After that age he envisages a wide variety of possibilities in continuing education and learning combined with opportunities for service and work which "explode the secondary school" as it is known today and involve a continuing life-long process of education.

2.9 SOME RECENT INNOVATORY MEASURES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

On the Western Australian scene there have been several attempts to experiment with alternative ways of approaching the problems of student disaffection in high schools. At least two schools have been established with specific experimental mandates. Initially, teachers in these schools were selected from a number of those volunteering to serve there. The orientation of the schools is pastoral, and room and facilities are provided for experimentation with different forms of school organisation such as flexible time-tables and team teaching. Deliberate attempts are made to reduce the traditional barriers between staff and students. These schools appear to be meeting with some measure of success. In one case the acceptance by the parents of the school and its aims, some of which are outside the norm for the State, seemed to the staff to be one measure of success.

A third school is organised as a series of sub-schools.[5] It would seem that most students and staff are favourably inclined towards this arrangement and feel comfortable operating within it. Among other innovatory measures introduced in recent years, work-experience programmes and alternative courses (for Year 11 students) are being organised in an effort to make students' school experiences more relevant for the less academically inclined. While some of the alternative courses have quite limited aims, others are very innovative and aim at increasing the all-round development of the students, helping them to grow in confidence and self-esteem.

These examples of innovation are quoted so as to illustrate the growing interest among teachers and educational administrators in Western Australia in meeting the needs of students in high schools more effectively than in the past, not only in the cognitive but also in the affective area.

5 Refer to Williams M.C. Subschools. Report of a study of planned change in a Government Secondary School. Discussion paper No.4 Research Branch, Education Department of Western Australia.

2.10 CONVENTIONAL WISDOM ON PASTORAL CARE

The aim of most of the efforts described in previous sections has been to promote student welfare and to show students that schools do care. They all emphasise a balance between academic and pastoral concerns, and a key to this balance can be seen in the relationships between student and teacher on one hand, and between student and student on the other - both as an aid to productive teaching and as a social end in itself. Advocates of good pastoral care are of the opinion that there can be no division between academic and pastoral concerns. The conventional wisdom on pastoral care as expressed by such writers as Marland (1974) and Bolger (1975) holds that if the school accepts the role of a caring community, it must organise itself so that it can act like one . As Bolger says

> "It is not enough to say 'all teachers care'. All teachers must be given the opportunity to care."

For a school to function adequately in respect of student welfare the importance of this aspect of its work must be recognised in tangible ways within the structures and daily operation of the school.

2.11 PASTORAL CARE OR SOCIAL CONTROL

As has been shown in the foregoing account, all sorts of groupings have been tried, ostensibly in an effort to give each individual pupil access to meaningful relationships in smaller units and to circumvent the depersonalising effect of being one among thousands in a large school. While such structures are being set up in good faith there is growing disquiet among many people who feel that the very pastoral care systems designed to help students are causing them to become hostile and apathetic. Such a view is put forward by Lang (1977). He claims that because of vagueness and lack of clarity in the aims of the pastoral care system it often degenerates into an extension of the disciplinary role of the school.

Best et al (1977) challenge the present functionalist explanation of pastoral care structures. In the functionalist model these structures have evolved to meet society's need for tension management and the alleviation of anxiety and anomie[6] in the face of rapid change. They argue that a better explanation is provided by viewing the present developments from a conflict theory perspective. In this model the pastoral care structures become mechanisms of social control and administrative convenience, productive of alienation instead of preventing it. This may be illustrated by the example from Lang's discussion of house systems in one school, where a perceptive student explained the system as follows:

> *"This is a very big school, and it is easier to punish us in small groups."*

2.12 RELATIONSHIPS WITH TEACHERS

Leaving aside such criticisms of the purpose and function of present pastoral care structures in schools it is clear that any such structures can only be as successful as those involved in their operation make them. Stuart-Jarvis (1974) makes the point that the success of pastoral care structures depends on the willingness of teachers to become deeply involved with pupils.

In his review of studies of pupils' views regarding school in the United Kingdom and the United States, Meighan (1977) concluded that "teachers are the central focus in children's comments about schools." In most studies dissatisfaction

6 A sociological term used to denote a loss of guiding rules (norms) and the resultant sense of insecurity and dislocation.

was expressed by both 'successful' and 'unsuccessful' pupils. In a survey of high school students in Canberra which discovered a "quite striking and disturbing degree of antagonism and alienation" among them, a widespread negative attitude towards teachers was also noted.[7] Sydney teenagers, surveyed by Connell et al (1975) also commented adversely on teacher attitudes.

2.13 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The foregoing has been a summary of some of the innovatory projects and ideas by which the problem of student welfare in high schools has been tackled in recent years.

The examples quoted of such attempts in Western Australia are an indication of the fact that a good deal of attention is being paid to the problems of student welfare. This results from a growing awareness of teachers and administrators of the importance of catering for the needs, not only of the academically able students, but every individual boy or girl. This awareness has been heightened in high schools where increasing numbers of students are staying on in school after completing Year 10. Many of these students are not suited to the more traditionally academic subjects and alternative courses have been devised for this growing population in many schools. The present study should therefore be seen as taking place against a background of change occurring at grassroots level in schools, where teachers are attempting - often with some success - to improve the climate for learning for their students.

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7 See Campbell R J Secondary Education for Canberra Report of the working committee on College Proposals for the A.C.T. 1972.

CHAPTER 3 : A REVIEW OF STUDIES OF ALIENATION IN SCHOOLS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The term 'alienation' has been used in a global sense, in the fields of sociology, psychology and philosophy in referring to a wide range of aberrant behaviours. In the area of education it has been used to describe many undesirable effects of schooling. People have been described as alienated when they could be more correctly described as frustrated or depressed. Conscious of this difficulty in definition several researchers have sought to clarify the situation, and are generally agreed that a specific condition exists which can properly be labelled alienation.

For the most part initial research into this condition was aimed at industry - one of the first uses of the term being Marx's description of the alienated worker. Dean (1961) and Burbach (1972) were among the earliest researchers to attempt to measure the degree of alienation in educational institutions. Burbach devised the University Scale of Alienation for this purpose. Campbell (1965) drew attention to the dearth of studies of alienation amongst young people at school when he wrote that

> "Although there has long been evidence from industrial psychology that the larger and more bureaucratically efficient the organisation the greater the degradation of the individual, this knowledge has had little influence upon our schools, and the widespread concern for the organisation man has not been accompanied by a similar concern for the organisation child."

Since that time there has been a marked increase in the number and scope of research studies on the problem of alienation in schools.

3.2 DEFINITIONS OF ALIENATION

Seeman (1959) made the first serious attempt to collate the various usages of the term alienation and he identified

five different meanings for the word as used the literature. These were:

Meaninglessness - the condition of being unclear about the meaning and interrelationship of what is going on around one, to the extent that one cannot make satisfactory choices based on one's own beliefs and values.

Powerlessness - the sensed inability to control outcomes in a given situation.

Normlessness - either a sense of disorientation in terms of norm values to guide behaviour or a conflict of opposing values within the individual.

Isolation - a sense of being apart from the society in which the individual exists.

Self-estrangement - a condition in which the individual feels that tasks are undertaken without any inner purpose or intrinsic reward.

Seeman regards these as separate dimensions of the general condition of alienation.

Using Seeman's classification as a basis, Dean (1961) attempted to draw up a scale to measure alienation. He regarded alienation as being composed of three components - powerlessness, normlessness and social isolation and developed separate indicators for each of these, as well as a general measure of alienation or separateness from society.

Bardsley (1976) in a study of alienation in Australian schools used factor analysis to further define the dimensions of alienation. He refers to two other dimensions by sub-dividing powerlessness into *task-powerlessness* and *social-powerlessness*, and isolation into *value-isolation* and *social-isolation*.

He defines task-powerlessness as a low expectancy on the part of the student that his own behaviour can determine the occurrence of rewards in school tasks. Social-powerlessness on the other hand refers to an inability to get others in school to do what he wants them to do. Value-isolation refers to a discrepancy between the goals and beliefs of the student and those of the school while the term social-isolation deals with aspects of social acceptance.

Fischer (1976) attempted to produce a definition of alienation which encompassed that of the sociologists, psychologists and philosophers and which would still be empirically viable. The main points he made were that alienation was a cognitive state and therefore investigators should measure perceptions and understandings rather then feelings, beliefs and behaviours and that the term alienation should only be used with specific referrents, that is , alienation must be *from* something.

Mackey (1977) attempted to define alienation of students in a wider sense as *adolescent alienation* from the overall culture of which school is only a part. He claimed that his instrument validly measured such a global concept of alienation consisting of three components *personal incapacity, cultural estrangement* and *guidelessness*. It could be argued that these three dimensions parallel closely the dimensions *powerlessness, social estrangement* and *meaninglessness* respectively, as used by Burbach (1972) to measure alienation among university students, and as later adapted by Cohen (1974) for use in schools. Burbach and Cohen argued that it was possible to measure alienation in these particular institutional settings because they were in fact microcosms containing all the alienating features of the wider society.

3.3. SOME STUDIES OF STUDENT ALIENATION

Over the past decade the phenomenon of alienation from schools has received quite a lot of attention going from a position of what Hoy (1972) described as "gross neglect." Various attempts have been made to define alienation in the educational context and to construct acceptable measuring instruments.

Hoy looked at the dimensions of student alienation and the characteristics of public high schools in New Jersey. He used Seeman's classification as a basis, but concentrated on *powerlessness, meaninglessness* and *normlessness*. He looked at the effects of school climate and pupil control orientation on these dimensions. He found overall that the atmosphere of the school was significant and concluded from the evidence that there was a need for "high schools that are less custodial, more humanistic, and more 'open' in climate." However in examining the relationship of each of the dimensions of alienation with the pupil control ideology and the school climate he found that there were differences. Organisational characteristics that were related to one type of alienation were not necessarily related to another. For example teacher disengagment and custodialism were strongly associated with normlessness and powerlessness but the more custodial the school the less the students felt a sense of meaninglessness.

Anderson (1973) approached alienation from the point of view of bureaucratisation. He examined this relationship in Ontario high schools. He found that the notion of bureaucratic structure seemed promising as a way of describing differences between schools. As with earlier researchers such as Punch (1967) he found that administrators played a key role in the bureaucratisation of school. Thus he concluded that principals who choose to do so might be able to reduce student alienation from school by modifying the organisational structure of their schools and classrooms.

Cohen looked at the alienating effects of the labelling of pupils inherent in selection and streaming in British schools. He also looked at the relationship between alienation and the child's self-concept of academic ability, self-esteem and extra-version scores. To measure alienation Cohen adapted Burbach's measure (designed for use with university students) to devise a validated "School Opinion Questionnaire." He found that alienation was higher among students in the lower academic streams and some evidence to support the theory put forward by Browning et al (1961). According to this theory alienation

develops in three stages. The first stage is when pupils become predisposed towards alienation by their early experience of the unrewarding nature of school life. The feelings of powerlessness, meaninglessness and normlessness aroused in this situation lead to a rejection of the school's values in the second stage of cultural disaffection. In the third stage the pupil feels that he has lost touch with his fellow pupils and the teachers and is thus socially isolated, feeling lonely and rejected.

With regard to self-concept of academic ability and self-esteem Cohen found the former a more reliable predictor of alienation than the latter. His findings also suggested that more extraverted pupils were likely to have a higher alienation score than others.

In an Australian study, Bardsley (1976) studied the effect of specific aspects of the home environment and the school environment on student alienation from school. He studied a sample of 356 students, their parents and teachers in four large metropolitan schools in each of three Australian states: South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria. Among his conclusions were the following:
Student alienation is a subjective state which varies from student to student, but is relatively stable for each student. Home environment, particularly parental aspiration, is important, as also is the amount of contact parents have with the school. The type of school, whether 'open' or 'traditional' did not have a significant effect on alienation. However, the students' perceptions of the school environment seemed to be responsible for feelings of social powerlessness in the school context. Bardsley felt that the most satisfactory way of tackling the problem of student alienation was by an approach to the parents, to increase their enthusiasm and involvement.

Reeves (1978) has studied the importance of the academic and vocational aspirations of students in explaining their dissatisfaction with school. He draws the parallel with the Marxian concept of alienation in industry and applies it to alienation in education. He has found that an appreciation

of young peoples' beliefs about work is of the utmost importance for understanding their attitudes and behaviour at school and their alienation. Young people come to understand how educational qualifications affect life chances. Therefore non-examination students can see no meaning or purpose in what the school expects them to do. For those who take the examinations, what the school has to offer is merely a means to an end. Reeves draws the parallel between the students' response to this situation and Marx's account of the alienated worker's response to non-expressive and purposeless work.

3.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

While the term *alienation* is still used in a loose sense in many contexts, it is clear from the preceding brief account that a more specifically defined and valid concept has been arrived at by a number of researchers. While there are variations in the definitions and dimensions proposed it is reasonable to conclude that there are (at least) three dimensions of alienation each of which may be measured for individual students and which contribute to the overall condition. In this study it was decided to adopt the definition suggested by Burbach and Cohen of three alienation dimensions *meaninglessness*, *social estrangement* and *powerlessness* and to use (with minor adaptations) Cohen's measure of student alienation.

The meaninglessness component of the measure looks at the extent to which a student can make sense out of his school experience and see its relevance. The powerlessness component examines the student's perception of the extent to which he can have any influence on what is happening to him. Social estrangement looks at the student's feeling of isolation in the school setting and the ways in which school experience can make him feel less or more comfortable with himself and with others.

CHAPTER 4 : STUDENT PERCEPTIONS: A PRELIMINARY STUDY

4.1. PURPOSE OF STUDY

As indicated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this preliminary study was, to find out something more about students' feelings towards school and their perceptions about the structure and functioning of the system. We believed that interviews with students in a small sample of high schools would provide some insights into the extent of alienation existing among students and also might throw up some issues for inclusion in the wider student survey.

4.2 PROCEDURES

Semi-structured interviews were carried out among a sample of ninety-two students in five high schools chosen from those within a convenient geographic distance of Nedlands College, by random selection. The interviews were designed to encourage students to talk freely about all aspects of their feelings and perceptions in relation to school. Questions were included so as to assist students in focusing on many aspects including the school structures, their relationship with teachers and the opportunities which they felt school did or did not provide for them. As well as giving verbal responses, all students were asked to complete two short rating-scales specially designed for use in the interview. One of these related to self-concept within the school context and the other related to conceptions of school climate. (See Appendix A) The majority of the interviews were carried out by the researcher while the remainder were carried out by a member of the committee and three post-graduate students of Nedlands College.

In most cases the interviews were carried out on an individual basis and in private, lasting for times ranging from twenty-five to forty-five minutes. In two instances it was decided to hold group interviews in which five students were asked to discuss their perceptions. However these sessions did not appear to provide information markedly different from the individual interviews.

4.3 THE STUDENTS INVOLVED

For each of the five schools two boys and two girls were chosen by random selection from each year grade, so as to provide an overall sample of one hundred. However it proved impossible for administrative reasons to interview eight of the selected students from one school, thus reducing the effective sample to ninety-two students. All students were given the option of not being interviewed and those who exercised the option were replaced by further random sampling.

On the basis of information received from each student it was possible to classify them, in relation to their academic streaming as Advanced, Intermediate or Basic. (Upper school students were classified on the basis of their status in Year 10 studies.) The final sample was composed of forty-three Advanced students, thirty-eight Intermediate students and eleven Basic students. Upper school students fell mainly into the Advanced or the Intermediate category and all the Basic category students were from the lower school.

On the whole the students were very co-operative and willing to be involved. Some of them were quite interested in the project and very few of them expressed any reservations. Though a couple of them were worried about missing class, others were happy to prolong the interview, in some instances to avoid returning to class. *"Keep me a bit longer... I've got English next."* In one of the groups a girl seemed threatened by the presence of the others, but she accepted the confidentiality of the situation.

In the following sections the findings of this study are discussed, commencing with the analysis of responses on the school climate semantic differential scale.

4.4 STUDENT RATINGS OF OVERALL SCHOOL CLIMATE

The students were asked to rate their school along eight dimensions from positive to negative attributes. The responses are shown in histogram form in Fig 1, and summarised in Table 1.

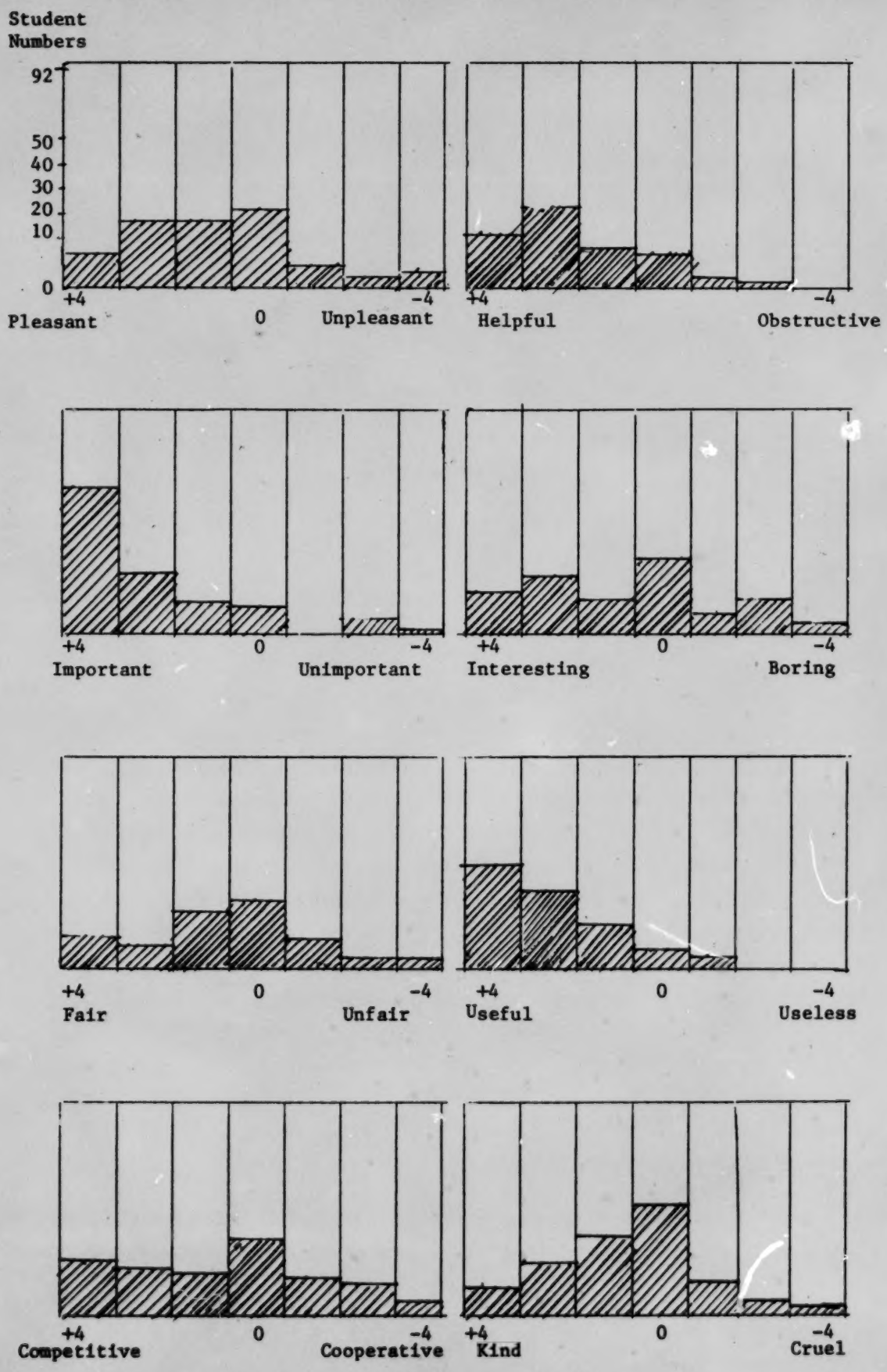


Fig. 1 : Histograms of Students' Rating of High School along Eight Dimensions.

TABLE 1 : SUMMARY RESPONSES OF STUDENTS ON SEMANTIC RATING SCALE FOR SCHOOL CLIMATE FALLING INTO THREE CATEGORIES

	Positive	Ambivalence	Negative	
Pleasant	61%	30%	9%	Unpleasant
Helpful	76%	19%	5%	Obstructive
Important	88%	9%	3%	Unimportant
Interesting	52%	29%	19%	Boring
Fair	49%	29%	22%	Unfair
Useful	89%	8%	3%	Useless
Competitive	52%	26%	22%	Co-operative
Kind	52%	40%	8%	Cruel

The overall pattern of responses suggests that the students were generally positive in their perceptions of school with particular emphasis on the importance and usefulness of school. On other dimensions there was a wide spread of perceptions. The relatively higher proportions of students who felt that school was boring or unfair contrasts somewhat with the response on pleasantness, where only a small number (9%) had strong negative feelings. While a majority of students saw school as a highly competitive environment,22% had the opposite perception. On a number of items there were a high proportion of ambivalent students notably in relation to the kind-cruel dimension where 40% gave the median response. In attempting to interpret these distributions it is useful to examine some of the attitudes expressed by the students during the interviews.

4.5 GENERAL PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL

After some explanation of the purpose of the interview and the project, pointing out its exploratory nature, and asking for help, the first questions were aimed at getting a general reaction to school.

The reaction of nineteen students was quite positive.

"I like it... I like being at school. It's good."

Only six were specifically negative.

"It's allright... I like being at school. It's good."

"not saying I'm copying them, but I don't like it, and most kids hate it - but you've got to do it to get an education."

The reaction of another nineteen students was expressed in phrases like, *"pretty good", "happy enough", "O.K.", "don't mind".*

Seventeen students said they had had the option of going to a private school and only three expressed regret at having chosen a government high school. One girl who had spent some time in a private school said she thought all students in government high schools should spend some time in a private school "*to make them realise how fortunate they were* " Five were at high schools outside their own area, having done examinations or made special efforts (such as requests to the Education Department) to get to the school of their choice. The four students who had come from country schools in Western Australia professed themselves more satisfied in the city school, but four students who had come from the Eastern States found it very hard to settle in and preferred the system from which they had come.

"I liked school in Victoria - it was better, smaller. There was a more relaxed relationship between students and teachers. The methods here seem old-fashioned."

The same feeling was expressed by one very sad boy from England, but another student from England in the same year and school had a different story, as did one girl who had transferred from New Zealand and found it was *"much better*

than New Zealand. You are more of an individual here, with more freedom."

4.6 MOST LIKED ASPECTS OF SCHOOL

When asked what he liked most about school, one wag replied *'holidays'*. More seriously one replied *'nothing'*, while three stated *'everything'*. Other responses were more moderate and are summarised in Table 2.

TABLE 2 THINGS MOST LIKED IN SCHOOL

	1st Choice	2nd Choice
Friends & Socializing	14	9
Teachers	13	9
Facilities (Library, Ovals etc.)	11	3
Subjects	10	5
School Atmosphere (Freedom, student-teacher relations)	9	-
Options	7	4
School Size	7	-
Sport	4	-

Other individual responses covered such things as uniform, competition, learning, school reputation, variety.

4.7 MOST DISLIKED ASPECTS OF SCHOOL

In response to the question "What do you like least about school?" ten students said *'nothing'* Four said they could not think of anything they disliked. The sort of ambivalence shown by many students was exemplified by the girl who said: *"I'm not thrilled about it, but it's good."*

In Table 3 categories of responses and their frequency are indicated.

TABLE 3 : THINGS MOST DISLIKED ABOUT SCHOOL

Work:	Homework & assignments	27
	Tests & examinations	2
Teachers:		18
Physical:	Big & overcrowded	2
Conditions:	Lack of facilities	3
	Bad canteen arrangements	2
	Gloomy classrooms	2
Organisation:	Routine	2
	Being told what to do	2
	Silly rules	3
	The way it is run	3
	General apathy	2
Lack of:	Career Education	2
	Camps & practical things	2

Single responses covered such things as uniform, lack of freedom in 4th and 5th year, lack of organised activity in the lunch break and *"other students"*. As well as indicating their dislikes, student responses often gave an insight into their philosophy or reasons as the following comments indicate:

"Nothing really. I enjoy life and if there is anything worrying me I try to forget it."

"I dislike the Head and Deputy because they go back on their word."

"I dislike Maths - and the way as a third year you are plunged from being at school into deciding what you're going to do for the rest of your life."

A second question in this area focused on things by which the student was 'turned off'. Again *'nothing'* was a frequent response, given by twenty students. One said *'everything'*. The pattern of responses is shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4 : THINGS WHICH 'TURN OFF' STUDENTS

Teachers	12
Hard & irrelevant work	7
Other students	4
Lack of discipline	3
Administration attitude to student Council decisions	2
Exams & tests	2

The remainder were single responses relating to the way the system is *" so geared to exams"*, vandalism and smoking in toilets.

Examples of responses relating to teachers were their *"primitive ideas"* and the *"lack of co-ordination"*, each one saying his subject was the most important.
An insight into the effects of members on their peer groups can be shown by the student who said,
"I'm turned off by the way rough kids bully other inferior children around - but nothing I say or do is going to affect them."
This student was obviously feeling powerless to do anything about this common and rather ugly aspect of school life.

4.8 POSSIBLE CHANGES ADVOCATED

Asked what they would like to change or do differently if they were in a position of authority, again twenty replied *'nothing'*, and two could not offer any other suggestion - as one student stated:

"There is something wrong with the education system, but I can't say what it is."

Eleven thought they would change the situation for years 11 and 12, giving them more privileges. Eight would have stricter discipline, three of these saying they would like to expel trouble-makers and *"people who give the school a bad name."* Sixteen people had suggestions for modified time-tabling to allow for shorter class periods and longer breaks. One girl

thought she would like a shorter school day and week *"like they have in France."* Changes in facilities including *"hot water in the showers"* and *"better eating places"* seemed important to six, while three would like to see more emphasis on sport and competition with other schools. Three mentioned the role of the principal.

> *"It would be better if the Head mixed in with the kids more - he'd know more about what we are like. He should talk more to the kids - we hardly ever see him."*

In another large school, one girl expressed surprise at what the principal looked like *"up close"* - she had never seen him at close quarters until chosen for this project! *"Silly rules"* would be changed by four students. Other suggestions included more litter-bins, less formal social relations, compulsory uniform, changes to assembly and a change in the prefect system. One rather pungent comment gave an indication of the fact that, for some students, there may be two sides to life in school.

> *"Everything is nice. I'd just like to change the teachers."*

4.9 THE PURPOSE OF SCHOOL

Turning now to the students' views on what school should do for them, forty-five were of the opinion that its major function was to get them a job and indeed fourteen saw it as the school's only function. Thirty-nine saw the school as having a wider function expressed in such phrases as,

> *"To teach me about life and the adult world."*
> *"To help me to become mature."*
> *"To teach me to mix with people."*
> *"To prepare me for getting married and what to do when you have a family."*

Eight saw it as the school's function to give them an enjoyable experience while helping them to learn - *" to keep me pleasantly occupied."* Six required that school should give them the basics - reading, writing, speaking properly - and three referred to the acquisition of good manners and discipline. Three thought of school as a

preparation for university. Four saw its function as preparing them for sport and recreation. Single responses covered such areas as making provision for gifted children, opening up the world of literature, providing training in handyman skills, inculcating respect for others and *"building students as people."*

Regarding the students' perceptions of what school is actually doing for them, fifteen saw it as helping them to get a job, nine saw it as helping them to make friends and meet people, four saw it as helping them to cope socially. One girl said it taught her

> *"how to sort out friends, and get around teachers. Teachers like a certain sort of person - somebody quiet and hardworking - so I go along, for peace sake."*

Five saw it as teaching the basics, facts and figures. Three saw it as preparing them for adulthood. Nine would not be more specific than to say *"it does what it should"* ; *"teaches you a lot"*, *"educates you"* ; *"increases knowledge"*. One saw it as developing ambition, teaching obedience to rules, compelling him to work (which he didn't). The ambivalence of many students is shown in such comments as:

> *"You learn to think a bit - but I don't like school.'*
> *"It gives you somewhere to go."*
> *"It has prepared me to go to teacher's college - sort of..."*

Five students felt school was doing nothing for them, or that it had a fundamentally unpleasant purpose.

> *"If you are not so smart, school doesn't really do anything at all for you. It just teaches me - that's it. It's meant to be unpleasant."*

Seven saw it as teaching pointless and impractical things. One of this group expressed disappointment that school organisation had stood in the way of preparation for his chosen job. Another response echoed this comment:

> *" School only does things that would be useful if you were doing TAE ."*

In discussing the purpose of school, students sometimes expressed strong negative feelings about school, interspersing their replies with remarks such as;

"bores me to tears at times"

"pathetic atmosphere with no involvement"

or *"a half-and-half place which makes you feel uncomfortable"*

One student focused his criticisms for this sense of purposelessness on the teachers.

> *"School doesn't encourage people, doesn't inspire people. Teachers seem to stick by kids who are enthusiastic to begin with and shun the ones who don't want to try.*

4.10 OPPORTUNITIES FOR USING INITIATIVE

The next set of questions was aimed at finding out whether the students saw themselves as having opportunities to use their initiative in planning and organising activities or whether they saw themselves as having any say in the running of the school. Forty-two students saw themselves as having no opportunities in the area of planning and organising, ten of them said *"sometimes"* without specifying how. Twenty-one felt that they were given latitude in picking options or in subjects such as English where they planned plays and debates and Social Studies where they had opportunities to use initiative. Ten saw sport as a field where they could exercise initiative and nine mentioned such things as planning camps, paper drives, United Nations' day or editing the school paper. Seventy-three stated that they liked or would like such opportunities and saw them as preparing them better *"for when you leave school. It gives you more self-confidence"*. However nineteen students did not want this type of opportunity. The kind of reasons they gave were as follows:

> *" It should be left to the prefects."*
>
> *" I want to concentrate on exams."*

One girl who had been elected as prefect turned down the position because she wanted to concentrate on study.

Another, who was a prefect, wondered why some students felt that they had no opportunity to help in things because, as a prefect, she was always looking for volunteers.

When asked whether they felt that their opinions were listened to, forty-three said *"no"*. Sixteen said they were listened to sometimes, but their suggestions were rarely acted upon. Seventeen said that teachers listened to their opinions. A number of students said they did not voice opinions because it would be pointless. This was illustrated in one school where students had shown strong opposition to an organisational change recently introduced. They claimed that they had voted on the matter but their vote had been over-ruled and ignored. A similar situation also obtained in another school where study arrangements had been changed in what the students considered an arbitrary fashion by the principal. They had presented a petition which they regarded as an expression of the democratic will and it too had been ignored.

4.11 TEACHERS' INTEREST IN STUDENTS

The students were asked whether they felt that anyone in school was interested in what they did as hobbies, or in what they did outside school. Thiry-seven of them felt that no one in school was interested in them beyond school and their classroom performance. Twenty said their friends would be interested to hear what they were doing out of school but fourteen specifically added that no teachers were.

> *" Teachers don't really care what happens to you out of school. "*
> *" Don't think the teachers would be interested."*
> *" Sometimes they just seem to ignore you."*

Twenty-five felt that the teachers were interested in them. It is interesting to note that for the majority of those, sport was the linking factor. One golf champion had his teacher as caddie, another had a similar boat to one of his teacher's and they swapped books and ideas. One boy had a brother on the state hockey team, and for the rest football

and football-coaching seemed to be the common ground.

4.12 PERCEPTIONS OF GOOD TEACHERS AND RELATIONSHIPS

When asked what constituted a good teacher a wide variety of responses was received. While many of the comments related to methods of teaching such as clarity of explanation, knowledge of subject and ability to keep students interested, the overall concern seemed to be with the teacher's personality and relationships with the students. The type of characteristics favoured are incorporated in the following portrait of the ideal teacher's personality.

A good teacher has an attractive personality, is considerate, has a nice attitude and good manners. He (or she) is helpful, kind and encouraging. He is friendly and talks to students a good deal, being able to unbend and joke and being interested in the students. He takes notice of students' thoughts and opinions and is willing to listen.

> *" He tries to really understand the problem and not make you shy or afraid ..... tries to get to know you outside of the classroom and can talk about other things than school and communicate on your level."*

> *" He's not self-righteous, not snobbish, does not have pets ..... and you know where you stand with him."*

With regard to running the class, a good teacher is firm but *"not too, too strict"* being able to allow freedom. He is fair, not sarcastic and does not give overly severe punishments. He does not shout - *"go berserk"* - and does not *"pick on you"* all the time.

About half of the students were prepared to say that in their experience there were more good teachers than bad teachers. However they presented a somewhat different picture

in response to the question *"What do your friends think of teachers?"* In reply to this question thirty-six people stated that their friends had a negative view of teachers.

> *" Most of my friends think teachers are all dumb and school is dumb "*
> *" They're real rotten - too much work, too much homework."*
> *" They reckon that teachers aren't very nice"*
> *" They look on the teacher as enemy "*

Thirty-one were non-committal or said their friends and themselves had mixed opinions about teachers.

> *" They hate them. Sometimes I hate teachers too... you know you get to that stage...but sometimes I like teachers... you know English teachers - and things like that. Kids like them 'cause as I was saying they listen to you."*
> *" Teachers are just teachers - just here to teach you."*
> *" Most think the same as me. Some of them for different reasons. Some, they just get on with."*
> *" They are there - that's all - like the weather."*

Nine students felt sure that their friends viewed teachers positively,

> *" Most kids think that most teachers are good"*
> *" Most of them like teachers."*

However fourteen felt that their approval was somewhat qualified.

> *" Brighter kids like the teachers - the others don't."*
> *" My friends like the teachers. I don't like some of the teachers - but if someone ticks you off, you feel sore for a while but then you get back to feeling friendly."*
> *" Some reckon that they are allright - some think there are a few that could be changed "*

In answer to the question *"Do you ever feel pushed around in school?"* fifty-two responded that they did, twenty-seven said that they did not feel pushed around and ten said that they

did not now feel pushed around but had experienced the feeling in the lower school. Of those who specified what made them feel this way, twenty-four said teachers and twenty-two said other students. One girl stated that silly rules made her feel pushed around. The general feeling was that you could do little about this except *"knuckle down, ignore it or fend for yourself."* Only ten people thought there would be any point in going to someone in authority for help - you risked being called a *"dobber"*. One boy said the only thing to do was *"placate the teacher by good work - or stare at him."* Another more militant lad said that he felt like *"hooking"* one particular teacher who *" threw his weight around."*

The students were then asked if there was anyone in school they could approach if they were in trouble, or anxious and upset.

In response fifty-two people mentioned the Guidance Officer as a possibility. Twenty-four of these specified that they had never gone there and several did not know anyone who had. It was the perception of one girl that *"the Guidance Officer might help you if you had a <u>really bad</u> problem."* Those who had approached the guidance officer had done so for job information pamphlets and application forms, timetable problems, academic guidance or personal or family problems. Of these latter, seven felt that they had been helped by this. However a few others expressed themselves dissatisfied with the Guidance Officer's service, saying;

> *" It was a waste of time to go."*
> *" The guidance officer is no use. I could find out about jobs more quickly myself. She wouldn't want to find out for you anyway."*

Twenty-one students felt they would go to the principal , deputy or form-teacher for help. Four mentioned the nurse and two the Youth Education Officer - though one girl said

> *" I could probably talk to the Youth Education Officer - he gets on with the students best, but he doesn't get on with the teachers best."*

Nine people felt that they would get help from their friends,

but twenty-one felt that there was no one in school to whom they could turn.

"All problems go home. You can't trust anybody."

Following on this the students were asked if there was a teacher in school whom they felt knew them, liked them and to whom they could talk. Forty responded *"yes"*, seven *"probably"* and forty said *"no"*. Five students did not know.

" I don't think they'd really be concerned about me. They've got so many children to look after they would not be concerned about just one."

" I've had one teacher for three years and he still doesn't know me."

" I've got him for thirteen periods a week but I would not talk about anything but Maths problems."

" My English teacher - she knows our feelings. I couldn't talk to male teachers."

4.13 THE WAY SCHOOL MAKES STUDENTS FEEL

At this juncture the students were asked to indicate the way school made them feel by ticking the point on a scale which most corresponded to their feeling. The results are shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5 SCHOOL EFFECT ON STUDENTS' FEELINGS

Unsuccessful	4	7	38	34	9	Successful
Rejected	4	14	27	27	20	Accepted
Encouraged	40	24	17	6	5	Put down
Unimportant	29	16	30	13	4	Important
Free	34	24	13	9	12	Trapped
Lacking confidence	4	7	19	33	19	Confident
	2-	1-	0	+1	+2	

Of the ninety-two students in the sample substantial numbers felt successful, accepted, free and confident and there was little tendency for most students to feel "put down". Within this broadly positive pattern of responses there were some

contrary views which are important to note. Large proportions of students placed their feelings somewhere in the middle of the range which again suggests some degree of ambivalence on their part. Furthermore there were smaller but significant groups who felt unsuccessful, rejected, put-down, trapped or lacked confidence. The most negative response pattern was shown for degree of "importance" with approximately half of the group indicating a sense of unimportance given to them by school.

Comparing the ways they felt at school and at home sixty-six students said that they felt very differently at home. They mainly felt more relaxed, more free, more at ease.

" In an environment where you don't have to watch what you are doing."
" Feels normal at home."
" There is more encouragement at home - it is a totally different feeling."

However for five of this group it was a case of feeling better at school.

" I can express myself more openly at school."
" Most satisfying experiences are with friends, then school, then home."

Sixteen students said it did not feel any different at home, while ten did not respond to this question.

4.14 HELP WITH RELATIONSHIPS AND FAMILY LIVING

A question was asked about the way in which school helped the student to cope with family living and relationships. Some people saw the only contribution of school in this area as the experience gained from living with different people in different circumstances. Fifty thought that school made no contribution. Of these, twenty-four expressed the desire for some help in this area, though seven considered family and school to be completely separate and saw no function for the school in the improvement of relationship and communications skills. The twenty students who had studied Health Education

and Human Relations found these subjects enlightening and thought that it would be useful to incorporate more of that type of content into their school studies.

" It would be good if they gave you lessons on how to get on with people and how to talk to people."

" Health Education lessons taught you how to meet and treat other people - very useful."

" Teaches you to become more aware of the differences in people."

" 'Consequences' pamphlets very good - I discuss them with Mum, but enjoy the group discussions too. It is very helpful to have the boys in the class."

4.15 ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ON CHANGE

At the end of the interview, students were asked to comment on the relevance of the questions dealt with, and also to indicate areas that they would have considered more important. About half of them had nothing to add and said they thought the questions dealt adequately with important aspects of school life. Of those who made further comments, the majority again showed concern for relationships between teachers and students. One girl said the question *"Do students think it is just a teacher's job to teach?"* should have been posed to all students. Others made a plea for better relations and communication with more consultation.

" I would like more opportunity to know the teachers as people - and then they would know what you are like."

" Teachers should learn more about the development and psychology of modern teenagers - how we really are - we are not the same as the 1950's.

" Teachers should become more closely involved with you and care about what your marks are."

"I would like to change teachers and have a nicer atmosphere and more friendly relations."

" I would like this school to be more like the community school I was at in the Eastern States - but it is too big."

This reference to school size was mentioned by a number of students - they would generally like smaller schools, though one boy thought large central schools would provide better facilities and preparation for life in tertiary institutions. This boy also thought that it was pointless talking about change unless the Government was prepared to undertake a radical overhaul of the system.

There were added pleas for more relevant subjects - and modern ones like aeronautics too. More humane and reasonable regulations were also a concern. The environment of the school came in for some adverse comments and suggestions were made for more colourful and comfortable surroundings. It was suggested that schools should be more flexible and lessons more interesting with students taking a more active part. There should be increased remedial help and newcomers should be given assistance to integrate into the system. In this regard one girl thought she would look for more uniformity among Australian States. One year 8 student also pointed out the difficulty experienced in the transition from year 7 to year 8, and advocated more liaison between schools to ease the changeover.

> *" They should help Grade 7's more by bringing them to school the last term of primary school. I felt very scared and lost for about two weeks even though I was familiar with the school because my brothers and sisters were here. There were not enough teachers to ask for help, and the other kids were not at all helpful. They look on first years as little 'punks'."*

Another student thought it would be a good idea to ask students how they are affected by the achievement certificate system. He felt it affected people adversely. More school-based social activity on the model of the American high school appealed to some of the students.

> *" The social aspect of school is very important."*

One girl seemed to capture much of the feelings expressed

by students when she declared:

"School ought to be there for the students."

Most students however were more optimistic than the one who said

"There is nothing that can be done to make school better for those who do not like it to begin with."

4.16 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Looking at the results of the preliminary exploration of student perceptions about their educational experience, it would be fair to state that there seemed to be a significant amount of disenchantment among them.

While a majority of students professed themselves to be satisfied with their school experience, and many of them were committed, a great deal of ambivalence seemed to exist and there was a sizeable minority who seemed unhappy. A great number, including committed students, saw school as a chore to be got through and finished with as soon as possible, and saw it only as value for certification and for obtaining a job. The area of inter-personal relationships between the teachers and the taught was one where concern was evident. The relationship between pupil self esteem and satisfactory school experience seemed to be an area where further investigation would be relevant.

The picture suggested by these findings was a small group of students with hostile views and attitudes in relation to school and of a somewhat larger group with very committed attitudes towards school . Between these extremes there appeared to exist a large group of students who expressed ambivalent or resigned feelings. It seemed as though many of these students expected school to be rather difficult and unpleasant and were pleased when it did not quite match these expectations. The student who is already quoted as saying

" I know there is something wrong with the education system but I can't quite say what it is."

could be speaking for many students who have adapted to the system while being vaguely disquieted about their situation. Such a view has been advanced by Weinberg (1971) who argues that, while public school systems automatically create alienation, the dominance of the ethos of conformity prevents people from being aware of their own alienation. (They know of no better alternative). This theory, if correct, would explain the inability, noted by the interviewers, of many students to talk about things in school which they disliked or would like to change.

The kind of relationship which they have with teachers seemed to be a matter of concern for many students. A change in the nature of this relationship, so that students might perceive teachers as being interested in them as people, would perhaps help to reduce feelings of disenchantment and alienation. Students, by and large, did not see teachers as having an interest in them as 'whole people'.

Students' responses also suggested that school environment and teacher attitudes to them might have significant influence on the development of self-concept or self-esteem. In a situation where significant numbers of students are made to feel unimportant and unsuccessful over a period of time it would seem inevitable that their self-esteem would be lowered. For some students this might well become a downward spiral of failure and disenchantment.

While the results of this initial study were tentative they did suggest that a wider survey of a number of aspects of student attitudes and perceptions would provide useful data and permit some further clarification of the factors which seemed most important. After deliberating on the findings of this study the Student Welfare Committee decided that such a survey should be carried out, among a wider sample of schools and students, into the following aspects:

(i) student alienation
(ii) teacher-student relationships
(iii) self-concept and self-esteem

(iv) the relationship between alienation and a number of other factors, including the pastoral-care structure of schools, size of schools and academic achievement.

Details of the second stage of the project and its findings are discussed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 5 : THE SURVEY - AIMS AND PROCEDURES

5.1 AIMS OF SURVEY

Based on the findings of the interviews reported in Chapter 4 and on the need already perceived by the committee for more comprehensive data on the extent of alienation and student perceptions it was decided to carry out a questionnaire survey of a representative sample of schools and students in Government high schools in the State. The aims of the survey were:

(i) to examine the degree and extent of alienation among high school students in a variety of school settings

(ii) to explore further, students' perceptions of schools and teachers in the pastoral care context

(iii) to seek out possible variations in the pattern of alienation in relation to a number of factors including school pastoral care structure

5.1 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Based partly on the findings from the student interviews and partly on available instruments developed in other research studies[8] a questionnaire was designed which incorporated questions relating to the following major aspects:

(i) alienation (the Cohen School Opinion Questionnaire was modified slightly for this study)

(ii) academic self-concept

(iii) academic level or background

(iv) teacher relationships

(v) self-esteem (the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Measure was used for this aspect)

(vi) socio-economic background

(vii) ethnic background

(viii) vocational and educational aspirations .

There was also a special section in which students were invited to make open-ended comments on their perceptions of schools.

8 The reliability and validity of the instruments is discussed in Appendix C.

The final format (see Appendix B) was arrived at after a pilot-project with a trial version using a sample of about 100 students from two metropolitan schools. Account was also taken of comments and suggestions by teachers and members of the Student Welfare Committee.

5.3 SAMPLING PROCEDURE

A sample of ten percent of Government high schools in Western Australia (i.e. twelve schools) was chosen by stratified selection procedures so as to provide a variety of schools in terms of size, geographic location and pastoral-care structure. Within each school a random sample of students, stratified by year, was chosen by the researcher. The sample numbered 100, except in the few cases of schools in which the total number of students was about 100 or less, where the total school population was included in the survey.

5.4 THE SCHOOLS IN THE SAMPLE

The sample of schools selected included large senior high schools, high schools and district high schools. They ranged from schools in affluent metropolitan suburbs to schools with a high concentration of migrant students sometimes situated in state housing commission areas. There were also schools in mobile outer suburbs and different rural settings. They ran the gamut of building provision from the very old to the very new - including the incomplete.

On the basis of information provided by principals, the twelve schools were categorised by pastoral-care structure as follows:

Form-master ..... 5 schools
House system ..... 2 schools
Tutor system ..... 2 schools
Year system ..... 2 schools

One school did not have any fixed structure, operating on informal arrangements only.

5.5 PROCEDURES FOR ADMINISTERING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was administered in the twelve schools during the months of March and April 1979 mainly by the project research officer - except for three schools where the administration was carried out by staff members of Nedlands College. The procedures for administration which were followed in each school included the normal precautions recommended for such surveys.

Prior to the school visits each student in the sample was contacted by letter and was given a letter for parents which explained the purposes and content of the questionnaire. (See APPENDIX D and E). Only students whose parents approved of their participation took part. (In fact only a small number of parents or students opted out.) Again at the commencement of the administration, students received a verbal explanation of the survey and were given the option to withdraw. Only one or two students did so. Where possible, replacements for those unable or unwilling to participate were chosen by random sampling procedure.

In most schools the questionnaire was administered to successive year groups of students, though in some schools the whole sample of students took part in a single session in a suitable venue. The students were given ample time to complete the questions and were encouraged to complete these without any consultation with other students, a condition which most students observed. Apart from this, the administration took place in as relaxed an atmosphere as was possible to achieve.

Most of the students were pleased to co-operate in the study and a number of them displayed considerable interest in the study to the visiting research officer. Confidentiality was assured to students and schools and this is preserved in the analysis of findings presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6 : THE QUESTIONNAIRE : WHAT WE FOUND FROM THE STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the findings from statistical analysis of the fixed-response items in the questionnaires completed by students are presented and discussed, leaving the analysis of the open-ended responses of students to the following chapter. We first examine the distribution of alienation scores obtained for the total sample of students. Since each school in this sample was representative of a particular combination of characteristics such as size, geographic location and pastoral care structure it is of interest to look at the distributions for each school while preserving its anonymity. Possible relationships between alienation and a number of student - based factors are explored. Students' perceptions of relationships with teachers and attitudes to school are also studied with special attention to the pastoral care structure of the school.

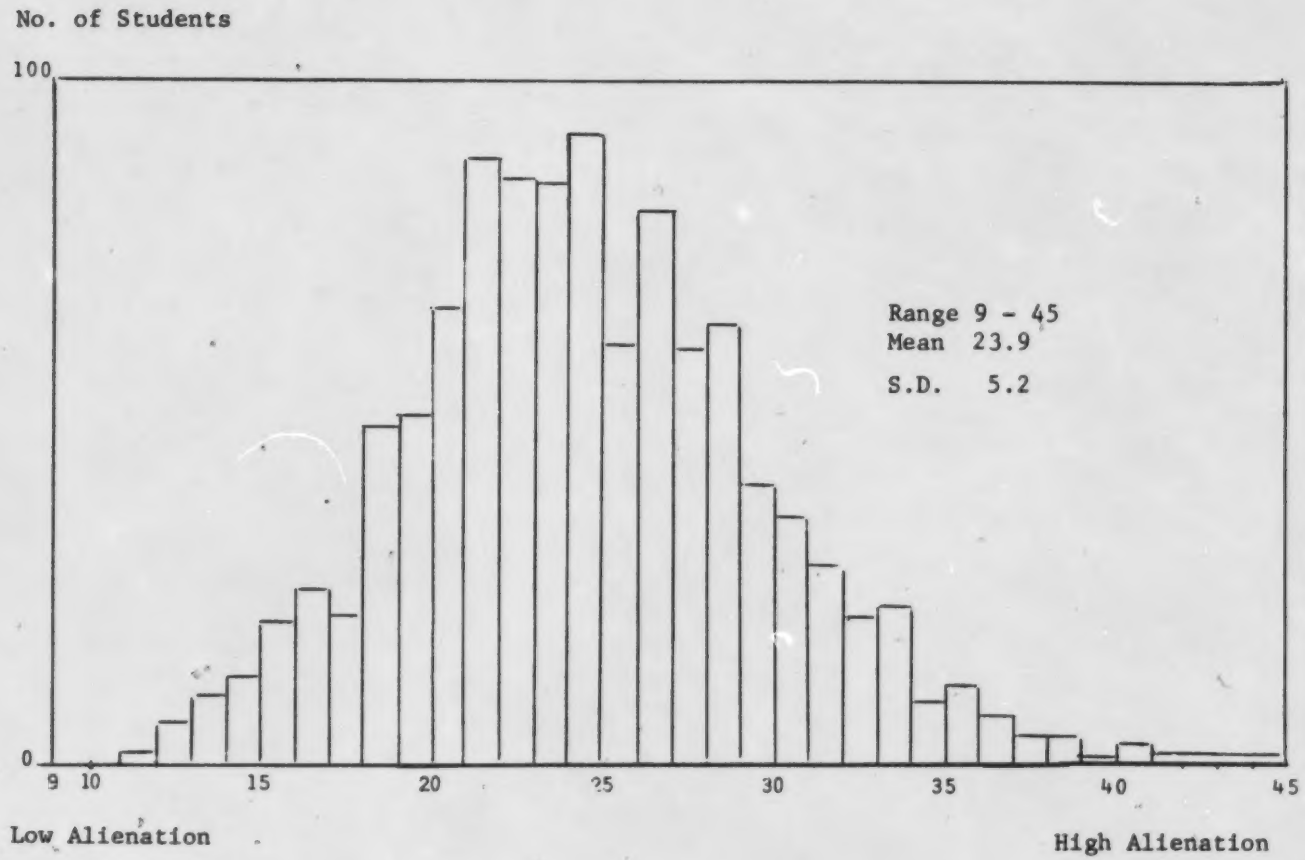
6.2 OVERALL DISTRIBUTION OF ALIENATION SCORES

The distribution of alienation scores for the total sample of 1077 students in the twelve schools is illustrated in Figure 2. The range of possible scores was from nine to forty-five with large scores indicating a high degree of alienation. In this case the scores were distributed between a minimum of eleven and a maximum of forty-five. The mean score for the sample was 24.2 lying below the mid-point of the of the scale (27). As indicated by the distribution it may be inferred that a majority of students have some degree of commitment at school. However a substantial number of students exhibit some degree of alienation, with a small proportion manifesting high alienation. In order to look more closely at the characteristics of highly alienated students, two sub-groups of the total population were defined as follows:

High Alienation (HA Group) :Those students with scores lying two standard deviations or more above the mean value.

FIG. 2

DISTRIBUTION OF ALIENATION SCORES FOR THE TOTAL SAMPLE



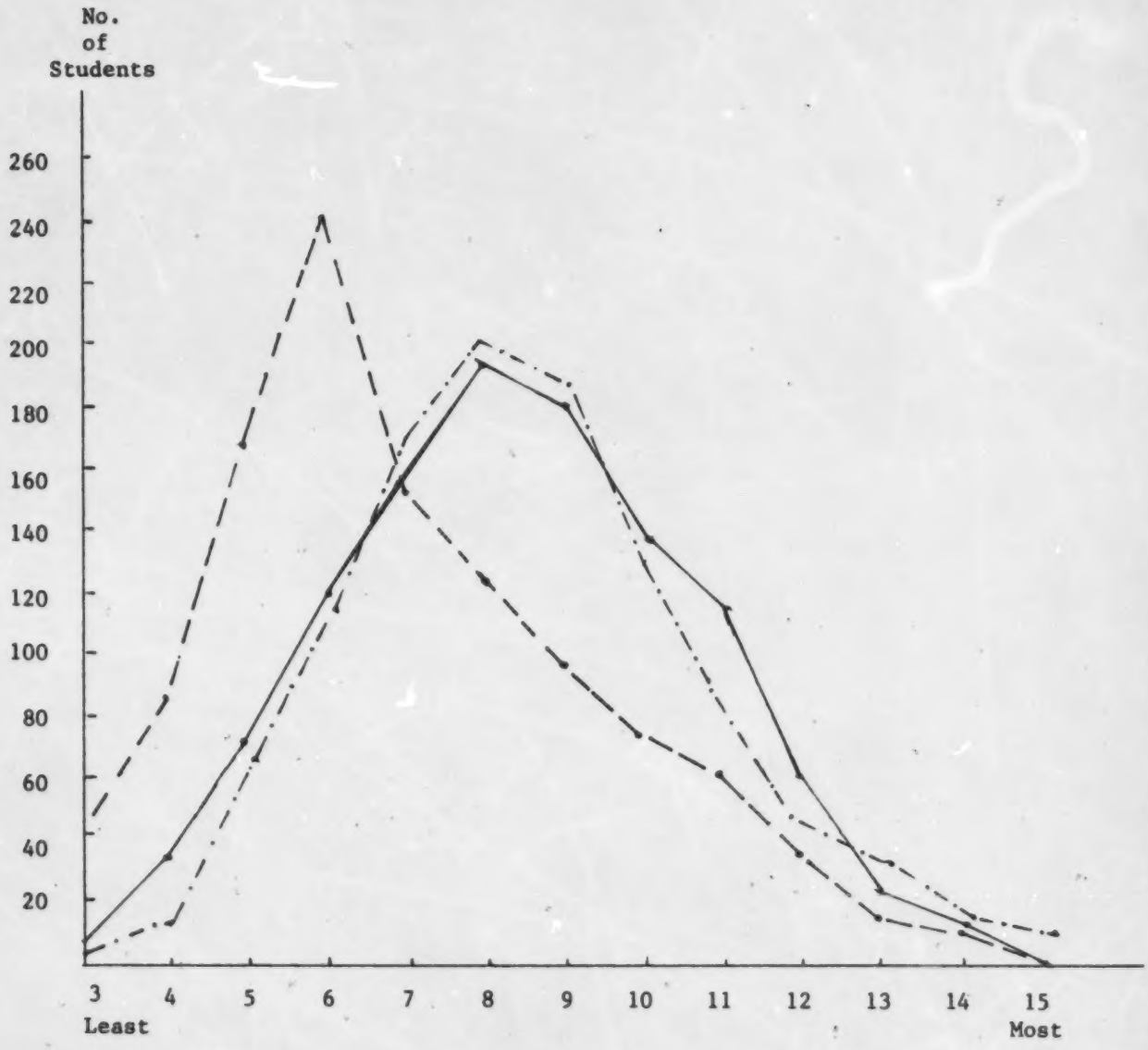


Fig. 3 DISTRIBUTIONS OF SCORES FOR THREE COMPONENTS OF ALIENATION FOR THE TOTAL POPULATION

Meaninglessness — — — —

Social Estrangement ————

Powerlessness — · — — · — ·

Low Alienation (LA Group): Those students with scores lying two standard deviations or more below the mean value.

There were 34 students forming 3.2% of the total sample in the HA Group and 31 students forming 2.9% of the total sample in the LA Group. Data for these sub-groups will be compared to that relating to the total population at appropriate points in this chapter.

6.3 COMPONENT FACTORS OF ALIENATION

The distributions of scores for each of the three components of Alienation - Meaninglessness, Social Estrangement and Powerlessness - are shown in Fig 3 for the total sample of students. This suggests that generally students tend to feel a sense of social estrangement or powerlessness in the school context rather more than meaninglessness.[9]

6.4 VARIATION AMONG SCHOOLS

Because each school in the sample was representative of a special combination of factors such as size, geographic location and pastoral care structure, it is useful to look at the results for individual schools, while preserving the anonymity of each school involved. From Table 6 it can be seen that there was a statistically significant variation[10] in the mean alienation scores among the schools involved. The two lowest mean scores were obtained for students in small and medium rural schools respectively while the two highest mean scores were obtained in medium-sized schools in the outer metropolitan area. One of the latter schools appeared to have a very mobile population during the period when the measures were being administered.

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9 Findings in respect of the three subscales of alienation must be treated with some caution given the small numbers of items in each and the relatively low item-to-total correlations and alpha coefficients for the powerlessness and social estrangement sub-scales. (See Appendix C)

10 Levels of statistical significance quoted in the tables in this chapter were determined by analysis of variance procedures except where otherwise indicated.

TABLE 6

MEAN ALIENATION SCORES FOR EACH SCHOOL

School	Size*	Rural/ Metropolitan*	Pastoral Care System	Mean Alienation	S.D.	Percentage of school sample within: LA Group (%)	HA Group (%)
A	M	Me	Other	23.7	4.9	2.4	2.4
B	L	Me	House	23.3	4.8	3.8	1.2
C	L	Me	Form	23.4	5.8	2.5	3.9
D	M	Me	Tutor	26.0	4.8	1.2	3.8
E	S	R	Form	23.6	5.4	1.8	5.5
F	S	R	Form	25.1	4.6	1.0	0
G	M	Me	Tutor	25.8	6.5	2.2	12.2
H	L	Me	Year	25.0	5.0	2.1	5.4
I	S	R	Form	20.8	5.3	8.2	0
J	M	R	House	23.7	4.9	3.8	1.9
K	S	R	Form	23.6	4.5	2.6	0
L	M	R	Year	21.7	4.8	6.5	0

*Size S = small
M = medium
L = large

*Rural/Metropolitan Me = Metropolitan
R = Rural

Difference between school means significant at .01 level.

The proportionof LA and HA students within each school are also indicated in the table as percentages of the sample number within each school. The four schools which had no students within the HA groups were all rural and small-to-medium in size. It is interesting that two of these schools I and L also had the highest proportion of LA students. These figures suggest that some schools tend to have a relatively high percentage of HA students while others (like G) show the converse pattern . Interestingly School D with the highest mean alienation score had relatively small proportions in both LA and HA groups.

6.5 DISTRIBUTION OF ALIENATION AMONG BOYS AND GIRLS

The total sample was fairly evenly comprised of boys and girls and it can be seen from Table 7 the mean alienation score for girls is a little lower than that for boys.

TABLE 7 DISTRIBUTION OF ALIENATION AMONG BOYS AND GIRLS

Sex	Number	Total Number%	Mean Alienation	S.D.	HA(%)	LA(%)
Boys	545	50.6	24.3	5.3	67.6	36.7
Girls	528	49.4	23.6	5.1	32.4	63.3

Difference between the means significant at .05 level.

The figures in this table indicate that, while the differences in alienation for boys and girls is not very large for the total population, there are substantial differences in the proportions of boys and girls who exhibit either very low alienation or very high alienation, with boys comprising a big majority of the latter group.

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6.6 ALIENATION AND SCHOOL YEAR GRADE

Table 8 shows the mean alienation scores for students in each school year. The pattern indicates that alienation increases from Year 8 to its maximum in Year 9 after which it decreases significantly in the following years. It should be noted that the decline in alienation in Years 11 and 12 may be at least partially due to the fact that less committed students are likely to leave school in Year 10.

Table 8 : Mean Alienation Scores for Each Year Level

School Year	Mean Alienation Score	Standard Deviation	No. of Students
Year 8	24.2	5.4	302
Year 9	24.6	5.3	279
Year 10	23.9	5.0	265
Year 11	23.5	5.4	142
Year 12	21.7	4.3	77

Differences between the means significant at .01 level.

It is interesting to examine the distributions of students from the LA and HA sub-groups among the school years as shown in Table 9 . When compared to the distribution for the total sample the distribution for these two groups show

(i) a relatively high concentration of HA students in Year 9
(ii) a relatively low concentration of HA students in Years 11 and 12 with virtually no students in this category in the final school year.

Table 9 : PERCENTAGES OF LOW ALIENATION AND HIGH ALIENATION STUDENTS IN EACH YEAR LEVEL

School Year Level	High Alienation %	Low Alienation %	Total Sample %
8	26.5	29.0	28.3
9	35.3	12.9	26.2
10	23.5	22.6	24.8
11	14.7	25.8	13.3
12	0	9.7	7.2
TOTAL	100 % (34)	100 % (31)	100 % (1065)

6.7 ALIENATION AND ACADEMIC LEVEL

On the basis of information provided by the students it was possible to classify them into three categories of academic level related to the levels at which they had been streamed in their lower school subjects. A number of students had not been officially streamed in this way and these were categorised as "ungraded". Table 10 shows the mean alienation scores for each of these categories.

Table 10 : MEAN ALIENATION SCORES OF STUDENTS IN DIFFERENT ACADEMIC LEVELS

Academic Level	Mean Alienation	Standard Deviation	No. of Students
Advanced	22.5	5.5	247
Intermediate	24.1	4.9	413
Basic	26.6	4.6	120
Ungraded	23.7	5.3	285

Differences in the means significant at .01 level.

There is a clear indication from these data that student alienation is associated with the academic level in which these students are categorised. The relatively low value for mean alienation for the category "ungraded" is particularly interesting since many of these students would most likely have been placed to intermediate or basic classes in the event of streaming. This suggests that the increase in alienation scores for students in the lower academic streams may well be partly a result of student and teacher attitudes and relationships developed in the streamed classes. The above findings are reinforced by an examination of the distributions of LA and HA students among academic levels as shown in Table 11.

Table 11 : PERCENTAGES OF LOW ALIENATION AND HIGH ALIENATION STUDENTS IN EACH ACADEMIC LEVEL

Academic Level	Low Alienation %	High Alienation %	Total Sample %
Advanced	40.0	21.2	23.2
Intermediate	30.0	36.4	38.8
Basic	0	21.2	11.3
Ungraded	30.0	21.2	26.7
TOTAL	100 % (33)	100 % (30)	100 % (1065)

While there are HA students within each academic level the proportion of such students in the Basic classes is relatively high. Moreover there are no students exhibiting low alienation at this level, in contrast to the Advanced level which contains about 40% of all the LA students in the sample.

6.8 ALIENATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CATEGORIES

Table 12 shows the mean alienation scores for students categorised according to socio-economic status of their fathers. The large number of students who indicated category 2

raises some questions about the clarity of this category. There is a clear trend towards higher alienation in lower socio-economic categories. Some students who responded *"I don't know"* may well have done so rather than allocate their fathers to low-status categories. (A reluctance by some students to do so was noted during the survey.) There are likely to be many reasons for the trend indicated by these data including parents' and students' perceptions of the culture and relevance of school. Nonetheless the finding is important suggesting that a somewhat higher proportion of alienated students have parents in the lower socio-economic categories.

Table 12 : MEAN ALIENATION FOR STUDENTS WITHIN SOCIO-ECONOMIC CATEGORIES

Father's Job	Mean Alienation	S.D.	No of Students	% of Total
1. Doctor, professor, lawyer, accountant, clergyman, architect, etc.	24.0	5.7	66	6.3
2. Business owner, farmer, contractor, etc.	23.2	4.9	358	34.4
3. Teacher, lecturer, social worker, etc.	23.9	5.5	70	6.7
4. Insurance salesman, real estate salesman, govt department clerk, bank teller etc.	22.6	5.0	103	9.9
5. Electrician, hairdresser, mechanic, baker, etc.	24.1	5.3	133	12.8
6. Truck driver, labourer, machinist, etc.	24.7	5.3	179	17.2
7. Not working	24.5	6.4	21	2.0
8. Father absent, not there	25.1	5.7	64	6.1
9. I don't know	26.1	5.0	48	4.6
Total Population	23.9	5.3	1,042	100.0%

Differences between the means significant at .01 level.

6.9 ALIENATION AND ETHNIC BACKGROUND

Students were categorised into ethnic background categories on the basis of language spoken at home. While this is not a precise measure of such background the data received gave some indication of the variation of alienation among students in each category as indicated in Table 13.

Table 13 : MEAN ALIENATION SCORES FOR DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF ETHNIC BACKGROUND

Languages Spoken at Home	Mean Alienation	S.D.	No of Students	Percentage of Total Sample
English	24.0	5.2	927	87.3
European	23.5	5.3	121	11.4
Asian	25.0	3.6	6	.6
Aboriginal	26.8	4.3	8	.7

Differences between the means not significant at 0.01 level.

The small number of students indicating Asian or Aboriginal background on this criterion makes it impossible to ascribe statistical significance. However there are some indications that Aboriginal students have a markedly higher level of alienation than others. Asian students also showed some tendency towards relatively higher degrees of alienation.

6.10 ALIENATION AND SCHOOL PASTORAL CARE STRUCTURE

The schools had been stratified according to the principals' perceptions of the kind of pastoral care system operating in each school (See p. 47). The results do not

suggest that the kind of pastoral care structure had any marked effect on the distributions of alienation within the schools. The mean alienation scores for schools with tutorial systems tended to be somewhat lower than for other types of school but it would be unwise to attach significance to these differences since there were other factors which may well have been of more importance than pastoral care structure.

There was an important discrepancy in the pupils' and principals' perceptions of the kind of systems operating in the schools. Table 14 gives some indication of the fact that many students were confused about the pastoral care system within their schools.

Table 14 : NUMBERS OF STUDENTS IN EACH PASTORAL CARE SYSTEM

Possible kinds of school organisation	Distribution By Schools' stated Organisation	Students' Perceptions
House system	191 (17.7%)	332 (50.8%)
Year system	188 (17.5%)	280 (26%)
Tutor system	172 (16%)	48 (4.4%)
Form master	442 (41%) form	286 (26.6%)
Other	84 (7.8%) other	-
No reply	-	131 (12.2%)
TOTAL	1 077 (100%)	1 077 (100%)

The fact that students were unclear about which system operated in their schools does not necessarily imply that the systems were not effective. However, when the responses from students to a question asking whether anyone in the school showed special interest in them were analysed, the results provided further evidence that the pastoral care systems were not impinging

on students to any real extent. The fact that almost half of the students indicated that no-one took a special interest in them is somewhat disturbing. The low ratings for those teachers in Table 15 responsible for operating the various pastoral care systems is also food for thought. One explanation may be that the school structures mainly serve the administrative functions for the school and do not lay emphasis on the pastoral care role.

Table 15 : PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES IN RELATION TO PERSONS SHOWING INTEREST IN STUDENTS

Person with Special Interest	No of Students	% of Total
House-master	8	0.1
Year master	21	2.0
Form master	75	7.3
Tutor teacher	37	3.6
Some Other Person	391	38.0
No one	510	49.0

6.11 ALIENATION AND ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT

Students were asked to indicate their perceptions of how well they were doing in academic pursuits at school. Interestingly a substantial majority (63.8%) consider that they are doing "fairly well" or "very successfully" in their academic work. Only 6.6% admitted to doing "fairly badly" or "not well at all". When one analyses the distribution of responses for the HA and LA groups in comparison with the total population and with each other, as in Table 16, it is seen that none of the LA group have a low academic self-concept. On the other hand amongst HA students a considerable proportion (17.7%) also have a high academic self-concept. The distributions suggest that, while there is some association between alienation and academic self-concept, there are some students who feel that they are performing well academically but are nonetheless highly alienated within the school system.

Table 16 : PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RATINGS FOR ACADEMIC SELF CONCEPT

Students' Perceptions of Academic Performance	Low Alienation %	High Alienation %	Total Population %
Very successfully	30.0	17.7	8.5
Fairly well	60.0	26.5	55.3
Just Average	10.0	47.0	30.6
Fairly badly	0	2.9	3.5
Not well at all	0	5.9	2.1

6.12 ATTITUDE TO SCHOOL

The percentages of students indicating that they liked or disliked school are shown in Table 17. As might be expected the mean alienation score for those who disliked school was significantly greater (26.4) than that for the group who liked school (22.0). Analysis of the LA and HA groups' responses shown in this table confirm the general picture, though there are small numbers of students within each groups whose responses differ from what one might expect.

Table 17 : PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTIONS OF STUDENTS' LIKE/ DISLIKE OF SCHOOL

Attitude To School	Low Alienation Group %	High Alienation Group %	Total Population %	Mean Alienation of Total Population
Like school	60.0	2.9	39.7	22.0
Uncertain	16.6	47.1	35.5	24.3
Dislike school	23.4	50.0	24.8	26.4

Differences between the means significant at .01 level.

6.13 TEACHER RELATIONS

Students were asked five questions relating to their perceptions of teachers and the responses to these were combined to establish a score for "teacher-relations". The range of possible scores was from five to twenty five with a high score indicative of poor relationships. The overall distribution of scores had a mean of 13.3 with standard deviation of 3.8 with actual scores covering the full possible range. Examination of the data in Table 18 indicates that ;

(i) many students indicated a good relationship with teachers

(ii) a minority of students displayed negative perceptions of teachers, with a small percentage indicating very negative relationships

(iii) LA students generally indicated good teacher relationships

(iv) HA students generally indicated poor teacher relationships.

The relationship between Alienation and Teacher Relations was found to be quite strong and statistically significant, the Pearson correlation coefficient being estimated at 0.6.

Table 18 . DISTRIBUTION OF TEACHER RELATIONS FOR THE WHOLE SAMPLE

Teacher Relations Scores	Low Alienation %	High Alienation %	Total Population %
5 - 10	85	0	25
11 - 15	9	31	48
16 - 20	3	38	23
21 - 25	0	31	4

6.14 TEACHER RELATIONS AND SCHOOLS

The mean scores for Teacher Relations among the schools in the survey is shown in Table 19. It can be seen that the mean scores vary from 12.0 to 14.2 and this variation is statistically significant.

Table 19 : MEAN SCORES FOR TEACHER RELATIONS IN EACH SCHOOL

School	Mean Teacher Relations Score	Standard Deviation
A	12.9	3.7
B	12.7	3.5
C	12.4	4.0
D	14.1	4.1
E	12.6	4.0
F	14.2	4.0
G	13.8	3.9
H	14.0	3.7
I	12.7	4.4
J	13.8	3.7
K	13.2	3.5
L	12.0	3.4

Differences between the means significant at .01 level.

A comparison of the data in this table with those on mean alienation scores for each school (see Table 6) shows that, while the ordering of schools in terms of mean-score values are somewhat different in each case, schools with a greater degree of student alienation (on average) also tend to have poorer teacher relations (on average) as perceived by the students.

6.15 TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS AND OTHER VARIABLES

(a) <u>Variation Among Boys and Girls</u>

The mean score for girls (12.7) is significantly lower than that of boys (13.7) indicating that in general

girls have a somewhat better relationship with their teachers.

(b) School Year

As with the findings on alienation, the mean scores for teacher relations for each school year group shows that these are at their lowest ebb in Year 9 and at their best in Year 12 (see Table 20).

TABLE 20

Mean Alienation Scores for each School Year Group

School Year	Mean Teacher Relations Score	Standard Deviation
Year 8	13.1	3.7
Year 9	14.0	4.0
Year 10	13.7	4.0
Year 11	12.6	3.5
Year 12	10.5	2.5

Differences between the means significant at .01 level.

(c) Academic Level

The mean scores for teacher relations varied from 12.3 for Advanced -level students to 15.1 for Basic-level students, showing a considerable deterioration in the relationship as perceived by students in the lowest academic level. Again there is an interesting finding for ungraded students who show a relatively good relationship with teachers.

TABLE 21

Mean Scores for Teacher Relations for each Academic level.

Academic Level	Mean Teacher Relations Score	Standard Deviation	No. of Students
Advanced	12.3	3.5	247
Intermediate	13.5	3.8	413
Basic	15.1	3.8	120
Ungraded	12.8	3.7	285

(d) Academic Self-Concept

As indicated in Table 22 students with a low academic self-concept have a significantly higher mean score (16.0) for teacher relations than students with a very high academic self-concept (12.2). This indicates that the relationship between teachers and students is associated, in the perceptions of students, with their academic success at school.

TABLE 22

Variation of Mean Scores for Teacher Relationship with Academic Self-Concept.

Performing At School	Mean Teacher Relations Score	Standard Deviation	No. of Students
Very successfully	12.2	3.8	91
Fairly well	12.5	3.5	594
Just average	14.4	4.0	329
Fairly badly	14.7	4.0	37
Not well at all	16.0	4.0	23

Differences between the means significant at .01 level.

(e) Like or Dislike of School

Students who indicated that they like school showed a better relationship with teachers (mean teacher-relations score 11.5) than those who dislike school (mean score 15.5), again indicating a strong association between the two variables. (See Table 23).

TABLE 23

Mean Teacher Relations Scores for students who Like or Dislike School.

Attitude To School	Mean Teacher Relations Score	Standard Deviation
Like school	11.5	3.0
Dislike school	15.5	4.1
Uncertain	13.5	3.6

Differences between the means significant at .01 level.

(f) Socio-economic Status

When the mean scores for teacher relations were analysed with reference to students from different socio-economic backgrounds, no significant differences were indicated (See Table 24). This suggests that the socio-economic background of students is not associated with scores on teacher relationship. This contrasts with the association between socio-economic background and alienation suggested by the data in Table 12.

TABLE 24

Variation of Mean Teacher Relations Scores according to Socio-economic Categories of Students.

Father's Job	Teacher Relations Score (range 5 - 25)	S.D.	No. of Students	% of Whole
1. Doctor, professor, lawyer, accountant, clergyman, architect, etc.	12.8	3.6	66	6.3
2. Business owner, farmer, contractor, etc.	13.1	3.8	358	34.4
3. Teacher, lecturer, social worker, etc.	13.5	4.0	70	6.7
4. Insurance salesman, real estate salesman, govt department clerk, bank teller etc.	12.7	3.9	103	9.9
5. Electrician, hairdresser, mechanic, baker, etc.	13.1	3.8	133	12.8
6. Truck driver, labourer, machinist, etc.	13.5	4.0	179	17.2
7. Not working	12.6	3.6	21	2.0
8. Father absent, not there	13.7	3.8	64	6.1
9. I don't know	13.8	3.8	48	4.6
Total Population	13.1	3.8	1042	100.0%

Difference between means not significant at 0.01 level.

While alienation and teacher relations are correlated, they have distinctive relationships with the socio-economic background of students.

(g) Ethnic Background

The mean teacher-relations score for the "European" and "Asian" groups were a little lower than that of the main "English" group, while the mean score of the "Aboriginal"

group was higher. (See Table 25). However the data relating to ethnic background should be treated with some caution both on account of the distribution of students involved and because of the difficulty of clearly delineating ethnic groups according to the criteria used in the survey.

TABLE 25

Mean Teacher Relation Scores according to Ethnic Background.

Language Spoken at Home	Teacher Relations	S.D.	No of Students
English	13.2	3.8	927
European	12.6	3.5	121
Asian	12.3	3.2	6
Aboriginal	15.8	5.9	8

Differences between means significant at 0.01 level.

6.16 STUDENTS SELF-ESTEEM AND ALIENATION

Self-esteem scores were obtained for each student in the sample by means of the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Measure which was incorporated in the questionnaire. Fig 4 shows the distribution of self-esteem scores for the whole population. The range of possible scores on this measure is 25 - 50 and small numbers of students obtained scores at each extreme of the range. The direction of the scale is such that high scores indicate a high level of self-esteem. As may be seen from the distribution, the majority of students had scores in the upper half of the range.

FIG 4 DISTRIBUTION OF SELF ESTEEM SCORES FOR THE TOTAL SAMPLE

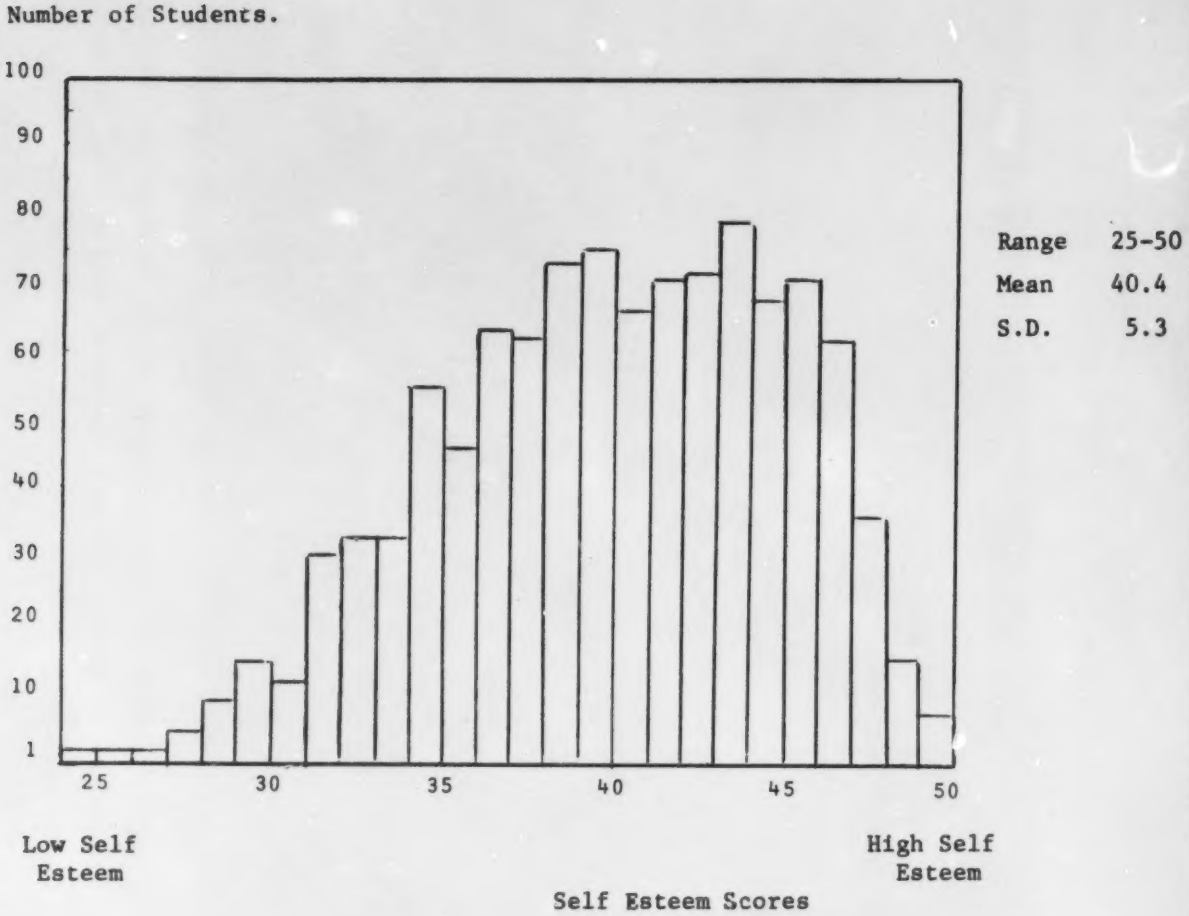

TABLE 26: PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS FOR SELF-ESTEEM, ALIENATION AND TEACHER RELATIONS

	Self-Esteem	Alienation	Teacher Relations
Self-Esteem	-		
Alienation	-0.38	-	-
Teacher Relations	-0.30	0.6	-

All coefficients significant at .01 level.

In assessing the real significance of the above relationships it is important to note that both alienation and teacher relations, as defined in this study, are wholly school-related variables where as self-esteem is a more general characteristic. Taken in this more general context, the relationship between self-esteem and the two school-based variables may be considered to be of some importance.

6.17 VOCATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

The students' vocational and educational aspirations were explored and any discrepancy between what they hoped to achieve and what they expected would actually happen was noted.

The students were asked to indicate which group out of five (see Appendix B) most nearly represented the kind of job they would "most like" to be doing. Group 4 contained high status jobs such as doctor and university professor. Group 1 contained jobs which required professional training qualifications (such as teacher or nurse). Group 2 contained jobs requiring a certain level of technical or artistic flair.

Group 3 jobs required an apprenticeship or longer training. Group 5 contained the least skilled jobs. They were then asked to indicate what they actually expected to be doing.

The alienation scores follow a trend. The highest alienation is among the students who aim for unskilled jobs. The alienation scores become lower through the various levels of skill to the lowest alienation associated with high status jobs. (See table 27). The same kind of trend is even more noticeable when examining educational aspirations and expectations. (See table 28). The highest mean alienation score for any group in the whole survey is among those who expect to leave before the end of year 10, who constitute 3.3% of the total sample.

TABLE 27 STUDENTS VOCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

Kind of job	Students hoping to get this job (%)	Mean Alienation	Students expecting to get this job(%)	Mean Alienation.
1. Job requiring some professional qualifications	30	(23.4)	24	(22.9)
2. Jobs requiring dedication or flair	15	(24.0)	14	(24.9)
3. Jobs requiring apprenticeship type training.	23	(24.5)	25	(24.2)
4. High status job.	15	(22.5)	13	(22.3)
5. Unskilled labouring job.	17	(25.3)	24	(24.9)

TABLE 28 STUDENTS EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS.

	Students hoping to get this amount of education(%)	Mean Alienation	Students expecting to get this amount of education (%)	Mean Alienation
1. Leaving school before the end of Year 10.	3	(27.9)	3	(28.3)
2. Leaving at the end of Year 10.	18	(25.2)	20	(25.0)
3. Staying after Year 10, to do an alternative course.	13	(24.6)	18	(24.1)
4. Staying to do T.A.E.	26	(24.0)	29	(23.8)
5. Going on to tertiary education.	40	(22.7)	30	(22.5)

6.18 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In general the findings presented in this chapter help clarify some aspects of the problem of student alienation in schools. The picture presented is certainly not depressing in that many students feel quite committed to their schools and have a reasonably high self-concept academically and generally (as indicated by the self-esteem scores). Within the broad picture, there are clearly many students who do display, to varying degrees, a sense of alienation from their schools, and it is perhaps these students who are of most concern to educational administrators, teachers and parents. The study of relationships among various student and school based variables provides some tentative evidence about the factors which may contribute to alienation or which may be varied in any efforts to reduce the alienation of individual students. Some of the possible implications arising from these findings are discussed in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 7 THE QUESTIONNAIRE - THE THINGS THAT THEY SAID.

7.1 THE OVERALL IMPRESSION

One of the strongest impressions that one gains from students' comments on their experience of school, both in the earlier interview situation and in their written comments in the questionnaire is that they deeply want to feel a sense of community, of belonging. They wish to be treated as whole people, persons in their own right. This emerges in the pleas for more friendly teachers who will have a chat with students and who will show an interest in them. This is corroborated by survey data indicating that social estrangement is one of the major contributions in the schools. It also adds significance to the finding that forty nine percent of the students in the sample felt that there was no one in the schools who had a special interest in them.

7.2 HOW TO MAKE SCHOOL MORE SATISFYING

In response to an item seeking comments on ways of making school more satisfying, students offered a wide range of suggestions which may be categorised as in Table 29.

Table 29 FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES - MAKING SCHOOL MORE SATISFYING.

Category	Frequency of Responses (%)
No Response	1.2
Complete satisfaction	0.4
Improved physical facilities	20.0
Curriculum changes	16.3
Organisational changes	21.1
Improved teacher-student relations	28.0
Other responses	13.0

Samples of comments are discussed for each major category in following sections.

7.3 PHYSICAL FACILITIES

Suggestions ranged from the mundane (such as canteen facilities and lockers) to such ideas as better recreational areas during class-breaks and improved sports facilities. Whether the high percentage of comments on facilities reflected the importance of these aspects to students, or whether it was the most obvious kind of comment to think about, was difficult to assess.

7.4 CURRICULUM CHANGES

The majority of comments in this category referred to the provision of more options in the curriculum occasionally in relation to studies of core subjects but more commonly suggesting sport and physical education. A few suggested better teaching methods. Typical comments were;

"teach you a trade"

"having more important subjects instead of subjects that are no need for you when you're grown up"

"more practical experience with matters that concern society in everyday life".

A number of girls referred to the need for equality of curriculum choices with boys.

"Girls should be able to do woodwork" and

"Girls should be allowed to do subjects that boys do".

7.5 ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES

"More educational excursions, sociale, weekend outings, and camps and interesting lunch-time activities."

This response summed up the largest share of responses which could be loosely classified as dealing with organisation and

administration. Dissatisfaction with the home-work arrangements was also evident in many comments.

School could be more satisfying
"if we had less home work, we only come to school to collect it".
"not necessarily less homework but less pressure, and understanding when a kid is bogged down and confused".
"homework schedules worked out by teachers beforehand so that students don't have massive workloads one week and negligible loads the next".
"make teachers believe homework excuses ".

There were suggestions about differing lengths of periods, school days, school weeks, for example.
"two days of solid working 8.30am - 4.00pm."
and about more student control over their own timetables.
One student stated that
"we shouldn't have to move around so much".
The wide variety of comments is illustrated in the following selection:
"a relaxation of strict ways of learning and behaving and punishing"
was supported by those who wrote
"get the cane burnt"
"get rid of the cane"
"ban the cane because it is medieval"
"more student council power"
"more trust and responsibility placed on students"
"tell kids what is going on so we can have a say in it".

The student who asked for
"an occasional day of films, free dress and some time during the day to go away - not out of the school grounds - and do what you want to do"

would perhaps agree with the one who wrote
"a different atmosphere is needed about the whole place"

7.6 TEACHER - STUDENT RELATIONS

Among the many responses which fitted into this category only four were looking for more discipline and strictness from teachers'.
"teachers shouldn't let kids off so easy."
"more teachers clamping down on smoking and drinking.'
"harsher treatment for roughies and trouble-makers".
"a little more discipline".

All the others indicated their feeling that better staff-student relations would make school more satisfying. The following are a reasonable representation of the responses.
"if school wasn't as formal - call teachers by first name"
"more respect from teachers"
"teachers and students to have friendship - not enemies"
"if more teachers regarded you as a person instead of just as a group".
"if teachers were more understanding towards students and treated us like humans".
"teachers having a bit more consideration".
"teachers treating us as their friends, not just a way to earn money".
"if teachers did not just regard teaching as a job".
"teachers could take more interest in their students".
"being treated as young adults and not kids because the teachers still think we are in Grade 6, 7 etc."
"greater student/staff contact - a headmaster who doesn't have old-fashioned ideas and who will listen to his students".
"less discrimination in the teachers'attitudes to lower achieving students".

7.7 OTHER COMMENTS

"the school could be more satisfying if people in it weren't so snarly and bitchy"

This presumably included students and was one of the small numbers of comments which referred to student- student relations. Others said that school would be more satisfying with

"better groups of friends"

"kindness shown to one another"

It would be better if

"children were nicer to you instead of saying and doing mean things"

"students weren't out to show each other up"

if there were a

"better interest given by students as a whole in school".

Into this category also fall the comments on uniform. They were generally against the idea of regulations about uniforms, though they conceded that particular colours could be a good idea.

"no uniform, so a person can come to school at least confident in appearance".

"I think we should be allowed to wear what we like but in school colours etc. - blue jeans".

"to wear what you think is comfortable".

"students should have a say in the uniform."

These comments could be linked with those which asked for more freedom and less restriction.

"more freedom to do your own thing"

"more freedom to speak personal opinions".

"more freedom to go down town at lunch hour".

"more privileges for year 11 and 12 e.g. our own 'special room', coffee-making facilities etc."

The rather negative perception of school shared by some of the students was expressed in a comment from one boy in relation to the restrictions he appeared to resent.

"Being allowed more freedom. School is like a prison 'cause you have to bring notes to explain silly little things".

7.8 WAYS TEACHERS MIGHT SHOW INTEREST

Students were invited to suggest ways in which teachers might show more interest in them and the many comments perceived were divided into four categories. Table 30, shows the distribution of responses in each category.

Table 30 RESPONSE CATEGORIES ON IMPROVING TEACHER INTEREST

Category	Frequency(%)
No response	5.5
Academic help	26
Personal relations	48
Classroom behaviour	13.5
Other responses	7

About 5% of the students left this section blank. The rest took it seriously and wrote down thoughtful comments. The extremes of comment are indicated by the statements

"Teachers can show they are interested by staying home".

"I believe our teachers are already doing their best to do everything".

Comments from each of the categories are discussed in the following sections.

7.8.1 Academic Help

In this category the majority of responses referred directly to the issue of individual help. Teachers could show their interest best in the following ways:

"helping when asked"

"a little more individual work with students, not only advanced students either, basic students need attention more urgently".

"by spending more time with individuals who are finding work difficult and not so much with the geniuses".

"confiding to you about problems you face in certain subjects and how you can improve".

"by helping you if you have problems in your work - they could do this by looking at your work and trying to figure out what you are doing wrong".

"if you are constantly getting low grades the teacher should show concern by talking to the individual and advise him on how he could improve".

7.8.2 Personal Relations

The largest number of responses could be categorised as dealing with personal relationships between teachers and students. Among these the fact that interest could be shown by talking informally to students was mentioned repeatedly.

"talk to us more"

"get to know the students a bit more"

"chatting at recess and lunch"

"talking on a friendly level"

"talking in the play ground"

"say hello when you walk past".

A number said interest could also be shown by listening to students:

"give us a say, listen to us, follow reasonable suggestions"
"listen exactly to what we have to say"
"agree with us when we are right instead of just thinking about your jobs".

Some talked about being treated as individuals, while others asked to be treated more as adults.
Teachers should

"treat you like you feel you should be treated"
"accept us for what we are".

They could show interest

"by treating you as an adult and not as an inferior person "
"talking to you on their own level of conversation"
"by being willing to discuss and 'talk' to students and not try and build a barrier between themselves and the student".

One student developed his thoughts about the way teachers were seen to repress individual differences:

"by starting to treat and trust us as different people not as a large mass. Everyone is different and some people are bound to stand out more than others. Schools always try to make everyone conform to the normal standards. If a student is of above average intelligence they try to push him back into the undergrowth, while trying to make them stay intelligent and therefore different. This should stop!!

The need for more sensitivity and empathy on the part of teachers was indicated by responses such as:

"caring about your feelings and don't embarrass you in front of all your friends"

"showing they are willing to help you".

"showing that they are concerned".

Other students mentioned the need for help with personal problems.

"going out of their way to help solve any problems"

"when you are having problems teachers should be around to give advice, care more for you as an individual, treat work not only as a job, lead you on the right track concerning decisions for the future. Also in the lower school you are treated as though you are a low form of intelligence. It changes slightly in upper school, but you still have that gap which exists between staff and students. When you are seventeen you are starting to think like adults".

"Come down to a level so we can talk with them. Sit and talk after school with pupils. If a student is behind or not coping with the work try and talk to the student and see if the subject is too hard, he has too much homework or personal problems. Teachers have many students to teach but surely they can see that some do need a little more attention than others. Teachers seem to put kids down to being a lost cause, instead of trying to see if they can help pick them up."

"Teachers are supposed to be able to be there if you need help even from a personal level, but most of the time they seem too unapproachable to even bother. I personally would never go to a teacher with anything but an educational difficulty".

Some students felt teachers should be interested in their home life or their hobbies and be prepared to mix with students outside school.

"be a friend both in and out of school"

"Show interest outside of classtime i.e. after school, recess, lunch."

"I live in a hostel. They should come around and help us sometimes (two of my teachers already do)".

"Have a class party at the end of each term at their place".

7.8.3 Classroom Behaviour

Some students painted a picture of general teacher moroseness with suggestions such as:

Teachers could show interest by

"showing a bit of enthusiasm for their work".
"by acting a little more enthusiastically towards their students and by not looking as though it hurts them to teach".
"Teachers can at least walk into class with a smile on their face".

Fairness in punishment was also to be desired.

"Well, they shouldn't cane you because you left your locker open".
"Don't tell you off when you do a mistake".
"They should not take out their temper on us for something else that happened to them".
"being understanding - not sending you up to the office every day for something little".
"by not giving kids the cane and not hitting pupils over the head in class with their hand".
"being relaxed - not all formal".

"being patient".

"showing respect and not picking on people".

7.9 OTHER RESPONSES

Some responses indicated that relationships with teachers were at a rather low ebb:

"I don't want them to be interested in me! And they could help if they let me make my own decisions".

"I'm getting out as soon as I can".

"That (teachers' showing interest) is almost impossible because students do not like fake worthless attention".

"Teachers should not be interested in individuals but the whole class."

"They can't look after just one person, they have to look after everybody".

While such comments came from a minority of students they do give an indication of the depths of alienation (from their teachers) which those students felt.

7.10 RESPONSE PATTERNS FOR HIGH AND LOW ALIENATION GROUPS.

A further analysis of the response patterns for the High and Low Alienation Group (as specified in Chapter 6). was carried out. While many of the responses for both groups paralleled those already discussed in previous sections, there were some differences in the overall patterns between the groups. While students in the Low Alienation groups tended to make suggestions for change which involved such things as more options in the curriculum and increased social activities the responses from a number of the High Alienation group suggested that their experiences (or perceptions) of teacher relationships were different from the other group of students. Examples of comments in which

negative perceptions were indicated included such phrases as teachers

"not snubbing you in class".

"doing things the whole class is interested in not just 'teacher's pets'".

"by helping all the people who are the lowest (sic) in the class and still help the higher ones - but not so much".

CHAPTER 8 : SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

8.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In this section the main findings which emerged from the student interviews and questionnaire survey are summarised. These give student views which are sometimes less than sympathetic to teachers. The researchers have no doubt that teachers are being less than fairly treated and that a survey that included teachers' viewpoints would provide evidence to counterbalance and to explain why such views are so frequently held. Nevertheless, the fact that these views are held is important and alerting teachers to their existence may well assist them in their task, which is as difficult as it is crucial to the community at large.

8.1.1 The distribution of alienation scores indicated that a majority of students felt a reasonably positive sense of commitment to school. While some showed a high level of commitment there was a significant number who were highly alienated.

8.1.2 *Social estrangement and powerlessness* appeared to contribute more strongly than *meaninglessness* to the alienation levels measured.

8.1.3 The factors which were most strongly associated with alienation levels of students were teacher-student relationships and academic level of the students. Those assigned to 'basic' or 'intermediate' levels showed relatively high levels of alienation and poorer teacher relationships.

8.1.4 Boys tended to be somehwat more alienated than girls, the latter also indicating better relationships with teachers.

8.1.5 In general, relationships with teachers tended to be formal, often ambivalent and sometimes very negative. The bulk of the student suggestions for improvement in school-life referred to one or other aspect of relationships with teachers inside and outside the classrooms.

8.1.6 Many students saw schools as impersonal and lacking freedom. They would like to be treated "*more like adults*" with less formal rules and unnecessary restrictions.

8.1.7 Some correlation between alienation and academic self-concept was found. A similar relationship (though less pronounced) existed between alienation and self-esteem.

8.1.8 Alienation varies from one grade level to another reaching a peak in year 9. As one girl in interview said

> *When you are in Year 8 you get pushed around. In Year 9 they don't treat you like a child - but you are still a kid to be pushed around... it's not until Year 10 that you are anybody ... In Year 8 they treat you like kids... in Year 9 you're just sort of left out ... you are there, that's all.*

The lowest level of alienation occurred in the Year 12 group of students.

8.1.9 Socio-economic backgrounds of students were related to levels of alienation with higher alienation scores among students from lower status groups. The evidence in relation to ethnic background was less clear, due to the limited variety within the sample chosen. There were indications of some association of this factor with alienation levels.

8.1.10 Smaller schools, particularly in rural areas, had lower levels of alienation and better student-teacher relationships than other schools in the sample.

8.1.11 Pastoral care structures such as house, year, tutor or form systems had no significant association with overall levels of alienation. Indeed students generally had little idea of the type of system operating in their school. Nor did they show any indication of a special 'pastoral' relationship with the teachers operating their school system.

8.2 STEREOTYPES OF ALIENATED AND COMMITTED STUDENTS AS THEY APPEAR FROM THE SURVEY

The alienated student feels powerless to influence what is happening to him in school and is likely to feel of little value as a person. He cannot see the relevance of what is going on in school or what he is made to do there. He is estranged from the school community and its values. This combination of attitudes has a bearing on his behaviour, which brings him into conflict with authority. He is more likely to be in year 9 and liable to leave before the end of year 10. He is working at Basic level and feeling very unsuccessful. He has poor relationships with teachers and does not like being at school where he feels that there is no one who has a special interest in him. The socio-economic status of his family is likely to be low and his own job expectation is for an unskilled occupation.

On the other hand, the student who falls into the category of low alienation is more likely to be female, of middle class background, be working at advanced level and have good relationships with teachers. She is likely to be satisfied with her performance in school, rating it at least 'fairly good'. However one wonders how typical was the year 9 girl who when interviewed was very positive in her attitude to school and felt that she was doing well in all her subjects which she was studying at Advanced level. She had plenty of friends and was happy with all her teachers. When asked about what school does for her she said

> *"It helps you to get to know all types of people - to sort out your friends - to get round teachers. You know, teachers like a certain sort of person, somebody quiet and hardworking. I go along for the sake of peace, but I experiment with doing things my own way at home."*

She went on later to say she thought that *"school was organised in such a way that even willing teachers don't get the opportunity to talk to students".*

8.3 IMPROVING THE SITUATION

As other research indicates and this study confirms there are some highly committed students in schools who enjoy what they are doing, see its relevance and have good relations with teachers. What can be done to make the experience of highly alienated students approximate more closely to this situation? How can more of the ambivalent students be urged forward to greater satisfaction and higher achievement?

Already schools are doing a great deal to provide experiences and courses that are more relevant to the needs of students of varying talents and intellectual abilities. Facilities and physical surroundings are being improved and school administration grows more efficient. However despite this, only about forty per cent of students were prepared to indicate that they liked school as it is. This raises some important questions about the whole framework and operation of the present high school system.

8.4 COMPARISON WITH FINDINGS FROM OTHER STUDIES

The picture of Western Australian high schools which emerges from the present study is consistent with that found in other countries. This has already been illustrated by the discussion of a number of studies in Chapter 2. It is perhaps useful to refer to the recent study by Rutter et al (1979) which has put forward a number of relevant findings after a comprehensive examination of conditions for learning in secondary schools in London.

They found that there were marked variations among schools in terms of the academic and behavioural outcomes which were not due to the physical size or structure of the school nor to its broad administrative or organisational structure. Instead they found that the students' achievements were related to the schools' characteristics as social institutions.

"Factors as varied as the degree of academic emphasis, teachers' actions in lessons, the availability of incentives and rewards, good conditions for pupils, and the extent to which children were able to take responsibilities were all significantly associated with outcome differences between schools. All of these factors were open to modification by the staff, rather than fixed by external constraints."

Among the detailed findings emerging from this study one relates to the rates of student delinquency observed. They suggest that part of the cause of delinquency in schools lies in *"the effects of scholastic failure or feelings of personal worth"*.

"For children who are unlikely to gain any examination passes there may be few advantages in being part of an institution in which one of the explicit objectives is academic success and in which the norm is scholastic commitment."

The implifications for the school system arising from this are quite fundamental in that as the authors say

"... there are likely to be problems in a system which is geared to success in examinations which are set at such a level that two-fifths of the child population are expected to fail."

8.5 ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO SCHOOL

Various attempts are being made by community groups and public education authorities to widen the range of alternatives available to students. Within the Western Australian high school system some interesting experiments of this nature have already been undertaken and it would be of interest to monitor the variations in student alienation in such schools. At a recent conference on secondary education in the United States, sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education and the National Association of Secondary School Principals the four themes of the conference pointed to some of the directions in which school systems might go. These involved suggestions such as:

- finding ways to involve students in curriculum planning and school governance.
- making school more relevant to students' present lives rather than a preparatory step to some uncertain future
- increasing community involvement in the school and student involvement in community service
- changing the school environment by making it smaller and more flexible in terms of entering and leaving processes (after the compulsory attendance age)
- shifting the focus of curriculum to include not only basic skills but also an awareness of values by which the students can set standards and make decisions for themselves.[11]

While such goals are much easier to state than to attain they do serve the purpose of opening up to discussion the goals and structure of present day schools. In Australia such discussion has also been going on. A very basic recommendation of the final Report of the Royal Commission on Human Relationships (1977) states that

> "The government should require the Department of Education to make a major effort to change the policies of all concerned with education so that these policies will be designed and directed to ensure the fullest possible development of the whole person, physically, emotionally, intellectually and socially..."

The implications of this study for such a change in policies will now be examined.

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11 see Broad, L. *Alternative Schools, why, what, where, and how much?* Education U.S.A. Special Report. 1977.

8.6 SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR CHANGE

While it is clear that there is no simple solution to the problems of student alienation, there are some possible implications which arise from various studies, including the present study in Western Australian schools.

8.6.1 Teacher-Student relations

It would appear that a major change in teacher-student relationships is required if students are to feel more committed to schools. This may involve some re-direction of teacher perceptions of their role and the development of skills in the area of interpersonal communication. Presently there is no provision for the average teacher to develop these skills either in pre-service or in-service teacher education. While guidance officers can deal with some of the special pastoral problems, the students are affected more by day-to-day contact with other teachers. The report of the Royal Commission on Human Relationships recommends that the training of teachers should include specific input on human relations to enable 'teachers to appreciate and respect the personal integrity of their pupils as social and sexual beings". While the commission was concerned with having teachers capable of dealing with imparting communications skills, the recommendation has a wider application to the whole relationship between teachers and students. The following interview extract illustrates how students would agree with this:-

> *"Schools should not emphasise so much the learning part ... but just overall relationship. Schools are maybe getting too big . . . perhaps they shouldn't be as big as they are, but I think - if right from the beginning we feel at ease ... the teachers don't just push us round and tell us we're students and we've got to do what they say ... but if it was - sort of more like two people and there shouldn't be that kind of difference between them, then I think we'd all get on a lot better. We wouldn't try to rebel against teachers*

so much if we respected them as people and not just abuse them because they are teachers. Because we've all got an idea in our minds of what teachers are ... there's a couple of nice ones and they tend to treat you a lot better as you get older. Like when you are a first year you are told, 'Right you're a first year. Grow up. You're not a baby any more', all the time - and 'do this, do that, act like an adult' while all the time we are getting pushed round by our teacher. It would be better if we were sort of left to grow up... and we could talk to our teacher. There would just not be such a divide between teacher and student..... I think there still is a division.

In schools like Community and Lance Holt there's not so much of a division... the kids are invited to treat their teacher like human beings.. by using first names... it's completely different. I don't think we should have to call our teacher Mr and Mrs - I think we should be able to call them by their first names... they call us by our first names... You know, we are growing up and we're going to respect our teachers if they respect us...

(Year 11 girl)

8.6.2 School Organisation and Pastoral Care Structure

The responses of students in this survey indicate that the formal structures of organisation of schools are not fulfilling their intended purpose of providing pastoral care for students. Students generally did not identify any specific teacher as "having a special interest in them", yet when teachers were asked, in the exploratory phase of this study, if they perceived their role as having a pastoral or welfare dimension, the majority responded affirmatively. They too indicated some frustration with the school system, which did not facilitate this role.

Perhaps the systems of organisation - house, form, year etc - operate mainly to fulfil administrative tasks at present. At any rate it would seem that there is a real problem in modifying school systems so as to develop a better interaction and mutually satisfactory relationship among teachers and students.

There have been many suggestions in recent years about ways of improving such interaction, including the involvement of students in school policy decisions, curriculum planning and the establishment of rules which are less restrictive for students.[12] Some attempts have also been made consciously to break down formal barriers between teachers and students so that a more relaxed atmosphere is developed in the school.

8.6.3. School Goals and Curriculum

A fundamental question in relation to schools is whether the goals and curricula presently accepted as the norm are appropriate to the real needs of students. It is natural to accept the status quo in this regard, but there are arguments, gaining popularity in many countries, in favour of a more broadly based curriculum in schools. The present goals of school are still predominantly academic or scholastic in orientation, despite the addition of a wide range of new subjects. The emphasis is largely on cognitive rather than affective outcomes which argues that more emphasis should be given to the development of the whole person. This would involve a distinct change in the content and methodology of present curricula in most schools. It is fair to say that pastoral care is perceived, within the present system, as a means of helping the school to run smoothly rather than as an inherent part of the schools programme for developing young people to their full capacity. By re-directing the goals of school in such a manner, more time and resources would be directed into such aspects as communication skills, social and emotional development and aesthetic awareness and expression. Thus students of all scholastic aptitudes would feel that school had something relevant to offer to them, unlike the present situation where many students are placed in situations which inevitably cause them to feel incompetent and out of place.

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12 cf Schools Council Enquiry 1: Young School Leavers. H.M.S.O. 1968

8.6.4 Streaming of Students by Academic Ability

There was fairly strong evidence in the study that the streaming of students into 'intermediate' and 'basic' classes had detrimental effects in terms of alienation, relationships with teachers and self-concept. Indeed it is reasonable to understand why the labelling of students in this way should have such results, particularly in the present school environment, where the pressures towards scholastic achievement are ever-present (for both teachers and students).

There have been numerous studies on the effects of streaming and other arrangements designed to assist teachers to cope with the problems of individual differences of background and ability in large classes. It is not easy to solve this problem, but it would seem to be important to do something to reduce the negative effects of the present system. As one basic student said during interview:

> *"Teachers think I'm no good. It shows all over their face. You can really see it - you can see the teacher talking more to other kids. They treat the duller kids unfairly."*

Hargreaves (1967) and Lacey (1976) have talked about the "processual nature" of school alienation; alienation that is set in motion by public labelling of certain groups in a negative way. This is supported by the picture emerging from the present study.

Self-esteem can be encouraged even among such students.

Beecher (1977) gives an account of one programme undertaken in a Sydney high school to boost the self-esteem of students who appeared to be consistent failures, which records some success.

8.7 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

A number of other implications may be drawn from the results of this study and others reported in the literature. Essentially they all make the same point. Schools need to become more humane social institutions (for teachers as well as students). It is possible for teachers and administrators to modify the climate within schools in significant ways. One essential element in the development of

more positive attitudes from students is the provision of curricula which are relevant to their present needs as well as to their future needs. Unfortunately the oft-quoted justification for school curricula, 'preparation for life', appears to assume that life does not commence until after one leaves school. Yet in our society young people spend a large part of their lives at school. The challenge facing all who are responsible for schools is to do their utmost to make that part of life fulfilling.

EPILOGUE

"Ever feel like a frog? Frogs feel slow, low, ugly, puffy, drooped, pooped. I know. One told me. The frog feeling comes when you want to be bright but feel dumb, when you want to share but are selfish, when you want to be thankful but feel resentment, when you want to be great but are small, when you want to care but are indifferent."

Yes, at one time or another each of us has found himself on a lily pad floating down the great river of life. Frightened and disgusted, we are too froggish to budge.

Once upon a time there was a frog. But he really wasn't a frog. He was a prince who looked and felt like a frog. A wicked witch had cast a spell on him. Only the kiss of a beautiful maiden could save him. But since when do cute chicks kiss frogs? So there he sat, unkissed prince in frog form. But miracles happen. One day a beautiful maiden grabbed him up, and gave him a big smack. Crash! Boom! Zap!

There he sat, a handsome prince. And you know the rest. They lived happily ever after.

So what is the task of schools? To kiss frogs, of course."

..Anonymous..

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INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. INTRODUCTION
Putting students at ease (interviewer has a responsibility not to upset the interviewee)
Hello, I am .....
What is your name? Shall I call you .....?
I am sure you are wondering why you have been picked out of all the people in your class to come to talk to me. I will explain what I am here for.
The Principal of all the High Schools meet together every so often and discuss things. At one of their meetings they decided to find out what exactly people feel about school, and what makes them satisfied or dissatisfied so that they can make school a better place - and that is where I come in.
I have been asked as someone outside the schools and the Education Department to come in and talk to some students. Your name was drawn out of the hat.
Anything you say to me will be confidential - in other words, whilst I might repeat what you said to me, I will not say who sait it. It is a chance to point out the good and bad things about school - a chance to put things right, or at least improve them.

2. SPECIFIC SETTLING - IN QUESTIONS
How long have you been at this school?
If it were possible - would you prefer to be at some other school?

3. SCHOOL RUNNING AND STRUCTURES
What do you like most about this school?
What do you like least about it?
Are there things that 'turn you off'?
If you were the 'boss', what would you like to change?

4. RELEVANCE OF SCHOOL
What should school do for you?
What does school do for you?
What will you do when you leave school?
(Year 11 & 12) Did you decide yourself that you wanted to stay on in school?

5. OPPORTUNITY FOR INDEPENDENT ACTION
Do you ever get the chance to organise and plan anything in school?
Would you like such an opportunity?
Does anybody in school listen to your opinion?
Does anyone in school show interest in your hobbies or outside interests?

6. RELATIONS WITH TEACHERS
How do you recognise a good teacher?
What do they do, how do they act, what do they not do?
What do your friends think about teachers?
Do you ever feel you are being pushed around by the kids in school - or the teachers?
If you are, is there anything you can do about it?

APPENDIX B

☐☐ 2

STUDENT WELFARE PROJECT

Questionnaire to High School Students

Section A

Directions: For the following questions choose the alternative which is most appropriate to you and place the number corresponding to the alternative you choose in the box provided. You have to put a figure because the computer can only deal in figures.

1. Are you
   - male (1)
   - female (2)

   ☐ 3

2. What languages other than English are spoken in your home?
   - None (1)
   - European (2)
   - Asian (3)
   - Aboriginal (4)

   ☐ 4

3. In what year are you at school?
   - Year 8 (1)
   - Year 9 (2)
   - Year 10 (3)
   - Year 11 (4)
   - Year 12 (5)

   ☐ 5

4. At what level were you assessed in English on the last occasion an assessment was made?
   - advanced (1)
   - intermediate (2)
   - basic (3)
   - not put into levels (4)

   ☐ 6

5. How do you think you are getting on in school?
   - very successfully (1)
   - fairly well (2)
   - just average (3)
   - fairly badly (4)
   - not well at all (5)

   ☐ 7

NAME _____

SCHOOL _____

SCHOOL YEAR _____ DATE OF BIRTH _____

Please fill in the above details. Tear off the slip and give it to the person administering the questionnaire.

6. Do you like school as it is? ☐ 8

yes	(1)
no	(2)
uncertain	(3)

7. Is there someone in school who has a special interest in you? ☐ 60

housemaster/mistress	(1)
yearmaster/mistress	(2)
form teacher	(3)
tutor teacher	(4)
no one	(5)
some other person	(6)

8. Is there an arrangement in your school like one of the following ☐ 61

house system	(1)
year system	(2)
tutor system	(3)
other	(4)

9. What is the name of your house, or other group to which you belong in school. _____

SECTION B

Directions: Below are some statements about your school with which some people would agree and some would disagree. For each statement choose a number from the scale below which best indicates your opinion about your school.

Place the number you choose in the box next to the statement.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	uncertain	disagree	strongly disagree

For example, if you strongly disagree with the first statement, put a 5 in the first box.

N.B. Be careful to put a number in every box.

1.	I can't make much sense out of what happens at this school.	☐ 9
2.	I feel that I am really a part of this school community.	☐ 10
3.	More and more I feel helpless in the face of what is happening at this school.	☐ 11
4.	It is very difficult for a pupil to know where to get help and advice in this school because it is big and complicated.	☐ 12
5.	Pupils at this school feel friendly towards the teachers.	☐ 13
6.	A pupil's personal interests are ignored when they go against the interests of the school.	☐ 14
7.	I seldom feel 'lost' or 'alone' at this school.	☐ 15
8.	Teachers just do not care about pupils as individuals.	☐ 16
9.	Life at this school is so confusing at times that a pupil doesn't really know where to turn.	☐ 17
10.	A pupil cannot influence what happens at this school.	☐ 18
11.	It is difficult to get to know the teachers at this school.	☐ 19
12.	This school is just too big to really look after each individual pupil.	☐ 20
13.	Pupils think of teachers as the enemy	☐ 21
14.	I like my teachers	☐ 22

SECTION C

Directions: Below are some statements that people make about how they see themselves. You will think some of them describe how you usually feel, but others will be unlike you. If the statement describes how you usually feel, put a tick in the box marked LIKE ME.

If the statement does not describe how you usually feel put a tick in the box marked UNLIKE ME.
Be sure to put a tick for each of the 25 statements.
Remember there are no right or wrong answers

		LIKE ME	UNLIKE ME	
1.	I often wish I were someone else	☐	☐	23
2.	I find it very hard to talk in front of the class.	☐	☐	24
3.	There are a lot of things I'd change if I could.	☐	☐	25
4.	I can make up my mind without too much trouble.	☐	☐	26
5.	I get upset easily at home	☐	☐	27
6.	I'm a lot of fun to be with	☐	☐	28
7.	It takes me a long time to get used to anything new.	☐	☐	29
8.	I'm popular with kids of my own age.	☐	☐	30
9.	My parents usually consider my feelings	☐	☐	31
10.	I give in very easily	☐	☐	32
11.	My parents expect too much of me	☐	☐	33
12.	It's pretty tough to be me	☐	☐	34

		LIKE ME	UNLIKE ME	
13.	Things are all mixed up in my life	☐	☐	35
14.	Kids usually follow my ideas	☐	☐	36
15.	I have a low opinion of myself	☐	☐	37
16.	There are many times when I'd like to leave home	☐	☐	
17.	I often feel upset in school	☐	☐	39
18.	I'm not as nice looking as most people	☐	☐	40
19.	If I have something to say I usually say it	☐	☐	41
20.	My parents understand me.	☐	☐	42
21.	Most people are better liked than I am.	☐	☐	43
22.	I usually feel as if my parents are pushing me.	☐	☐	44
23.	I often get discouraged in school	☐	☐	45
24.	Things usually don't bother me.	☐	☐	46
25.	I can't be depended on	☐	☐	47

SECTION D

Directions: This part asks about your plans and goals concerning your future occupation. People who have plans and goals that are different from yours will probably not choose the same answers as you. Be sure to mark the answers that best describe your plans and your goals.

Read the five groups of jobs below:

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
registered nurse	actor	wool classer
television cameraman	watchmaker	welder
land surveyor	chiropodist	commercial traveller
aircraft navigator	antique dealer	public servant
tax consultant	farm manager	beautician
probation officer	laboratory assistant	dressmaker
teacher	singer with a band	policeman

Group 4	Group 5
university professor	driver of a large truck
vice-president of a large company	shearer
civil engineer	shop assistant
newspaper editor	ambulance attendant
statistician	waitress
school principal	telephonist
doctor	waterside worker

Now answer questions 1 & 2 by putting the appropriate number in the box.
Example : if group 3 seems most suitable put 3 in the box.

1. Which group contains jobs most similar to the kind of work you would most like to do when you finish your schooling ? ☐ 48

2. Which group contains jobs most similar to the kind of work you will probably be doing eventually during your life-time? ☐ 49

Below are some options about when to leave school. They are numbered from 1 to 5. Look at them and then answer questions 3 and 4 by putting the appropriate number in the box.

(1) Leave before the end of year 10.
(2) Leave at the end of year 10
(3) Attend school beyond year 10 and do an alternative course
(4) Stay till the end of year 12 and do your T.A.E. exam
(5) Go to college, tech. or university.

3. If you could get as much education as you wanted, how far would you go with it? ☐ 50

4. How far do you think you actually will go in education before beginning your full time work career? Put the appropriate number in the box. ☐ 51

5. Which of the following best describes the occupation of your father. ☐ 52

A job like that of a

(1) doctor, professor, lawyer, accountant, clergyman, architect etc.,

(2) business owner, farmer, contractor etc.,

(3) teacher, lecturer, social worker etc.,

(4) insurance salesman, real estate salesman, govt. department clerk, bank teller etc.,

(5) electrician, hairdresser, mechanic, baker etc.,

(6) truck driver, labourer, machinist etc.,

OR

(7) not working

(8) father not there

(9) I don't know.

6. Years 11 and 12 : Are you doing ☐ 59

(1) Maths 2 & 3, Physics and Chemistry ?

(2) Another combination of T.A.E. subjects?

(3) An alternative course such as business education

☐ 62

☐ 63

☐ 64

☐ 65

SECTION E

Write down three things you think would make school more satisfying.

1.

2.

3.

2. Write down the best way in which teachers can show they are interested in you.

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX C

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF SCALES

Three main measures incorporated in the student questionnaire were:

(1) an alienation measure;

(2) a teacher - student relationship measure;

(3) a self-esteem measure.

Data and appropriate references in relation to each measure are provided below.

1. ALIENATION MEASURE

The measure chosen for this study was the Cohen School Opinion Questionnaire (1974) which consists of nine items comprising three sub-scales - meaninglessness, powerlessness and social estrangement - containing three items in each sub-scale. Cohen derived his measure from Burbach's University Alienation Scale (1972). The conceptual basis for the three sub-scales was derived from the work of Seeman (1959), Dean (1961) and Middleton (1963). The detailed procedures employed in establishing the validity and reliability of this scale are discussed by Burbach. The corrected split-half reliability co-efficients for powerlessness, meaninglessness and social estrangement were .79, .89 and .72 respectively : for the total scale the corrected reliability was .92. Validity of the various scales was established using factor analysis and item-to-total correlations.

Cohen chose the nine items from Burbach's scale and re-wrote them with the school as the referent. In a pilot-study in British schools he obtained a correlation co-efficient of .64 between his scale and the remaining 15 items of the original scale.

Prior to using the Cohen scale in the present study, changes in wording were made to some items so as to make them more readily understood by students in the Australian context. These changes are shown below.

ORIGINAL WORDING	REVISED WORDING
The size and complexity of this school make it difficult for a pupil to know where to get help or advice.	It is difficult for a pupil to know where to get help and advice in this school because it is big and complicated.
A pupil has little chance of protecting his personal interests when they conflict with those of this school.	A pupil's personal interests are ignored when they go against the interests of the school.
It is wishful thinking to believe that a pupil can influence what happens at this school.	A pupil cannot influence what happens at this school.

The item-to-total correlations and standardised alpha co-efficients for each sub-scale and for the total alienation scale are shown below.

TABLE 31

Table 31 : Item-to-total correlations and alpha co-efficients for alienation scales.
Numbers quoted refer to items in SECTION B of the student questionnaire (see Appendix B)

ALIENATION SCALE

Items	Item-to-total Correlation
1	.46
2	.38
3	.47
4	.41
6	.32
7	.11
9	.46
10	.37
12	.24

Standardized Alpha Co-efficient .69

	SUB-SCALES		
	Items	Item-to-total Correlation	Standardized Alpha Co-efficient
Meaninglessness	1	.40	.60
	4	.38	
	9	.44	
Powerlessness	3	.27	.46
	6	.27	
	10	.3	
Social Estrangement	2	.13	.20
	7	.1	
	12	.08	

2. TEACHER RELATIONSHIP MEASURE

The five items comprising the measure of teacher - student relationships as perceived by students, were drawn from a wide range of comments made by students during the student interviews, and in the pilot stage of the questionnaire construction. Preliminary analysis and student feedback indicated that the scale items together would provide a valid and reasonably reliable measure of teacher - student relationships. Reliability data for this measure are shown in Table 32.

TABLE 32

Item-to-total correlations and standardised alpha co-efficient for Teacher Relations measure.

Items	Item-to-total Correlation
5	.46
8	.50
11	.31
13	.50
14	.54
Standardised Alpha Co-efficient	.70

3. SELF-ESTEEM MEASURE

A shortened form of the Coopersmith self-esteem inventory, containing 25 of the original 58 items, was used in this study. The validation and reliability procedures are discussed in an article by Coopersmith (1959) who reported a test-retest reliability of 0.88 for the measure. Argyle and Lee (1972) who constructed the shortened version found that the correlation between both versions of the scale was 0.86. Table 33 (following page) shows the reliability data obtained in the present study.

TABLE 33

Item-to-total correlations and standardised alpha co-efficients for self-esteem measure. Items from Section C of student questionnaire (see Appendix B)

Items	Item-to-total Correlation
1	.35
2	.29
3	.14
4	.33
5	.38
6	.35
7	.35
8	.38
9	.31
10	.33
11	.32
12	.46
13	.47
14	.35
15	.42
16	.40
17	.40
18	.30
19	.27
20	.40
21	.41
22	.37
23	.40
24	.26
25	.28
Standardized Alpha Co-efficient	.81

NEDLANDS COLLEGE of Advanced Education

In reply refer to
MD:vr

Dear

I have been asked to do some research into the things which students see as making school a satisfactory or unsatisfactory experience, so I am asking for your help.

One day, in the near future, I will be visiting your school and I would like you to fill in a questionnaire for me. The sorts of things the questionnaire deals with are your feelings about school, and yourself as a pupil in the school. These are topics about which there are no right or wrong answers - the only thing that matters is what you think and feel, and if you answer the questions honestly, the results will be very useful in improving school for everybody. What you answer will be confidential. Nobody will see it but me, you will not have to worry about anything you put down. I will only use the information in such a way as to guarantee that no-one will know where it came from.

I hope that you will be willing to help in this project. I look forward to meeting you when I visit your school.

Yours sincerely,

MARY P. DYNAN
Research Officer

Cnr Stirling Highway & Hampden Road Nedlands Western Australia 6009 Tel 386 5555

Appendix E

NEDLANDS COLLEGE of Advanced Education

In reply refer to
MD:vr

20 March 1979

NOTICE TO PARENTS ABOUT THE STUDENT WELFARE RESEARCH PROJECT

Recently the Education Department, in cooperation with Nedlands College of Advanced Education, instituted a research project to look into problems of student welfare and pastoral care in high schools. The aim is to find out about those things which make school a satisfying experience, or otherwise, for young people. To do this a random sample of students will be asked to cooperate by filling in a questionnaire which asks about their feelings regarding school and themselves in the school situation.

A further sample will also be asked to cooperate by taking part in a follow-up, which might involve an interview or a group discussion. The information obtained will be treated in strict confidence, and will only be used in a way that will guarantee the anonymity of its source. As the purpose of the research is to help to make schools more satisfying for both pupils and staff, it is hoped that full cooperation will be forthcoming. However, if any parent feels they would prefer their child not to be involved then please inform the Principal.

MARY P. DYNAN
Research Officer

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